

DOCTORAL THESIS

Equal Access and Quality in Early Childhood Education A Case Study of Early Childhood Settings in Imo State, Nigeria

Aligbe Ngozi , Teresa

Award date:
2017

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

**Equal Access and Quality in Early Childhood Education:
A Case Study of Early Childhood Settings in Imo State, Nigeria**

By

Aligbe Ngozi Teresa

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

School of Education

University of Roehampton

2017

Ethics Approval

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference EDU 13/061 in the Department of Education and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 29.01.14.

Approval Page


UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

RESEARCH DEGREES BOARD

ENTRY FORM FOR EXAMINATION FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The candidate should complete Section 1 of this form and submit it to the supervisors. When section 2 has been completed the form should be considered by the Department's Research Student Review Board and then approved by Head of Department (or equivalent).

SECTION 1: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE CANDIDATE

Title	Name (your name for your certificate will be taken from the student record system, please ensure this is up to date)		
Ms	Ngozi Aligbe		
Student ID Number ALI13365072		Date of First Registration January 2014	
Correspondence Address, Telephone Number and Email Address (your final certificate will be posted to your address given on the student record system, please ensure this is up to date)			
21 Connaught Road Chatham Kent ME4 5DJ		Personal: nkemaligbe@yahoo.com	
Director of Studies Professor Mathias Urban mathias.urban@roehampton.ac.uk		Co-Supervisor 1: Dr Suzanne Quinn Suzanne.Quinn@roehampton.ac.uk Co-Supervisor 2 (Please include an external email address for co-supervisors who are external members of staff)	
Proposed Title of Thesis Equal Access and Quality Learning in Early Childhood Education: A Case Study of Early Childhood Settings in Imo State, Nigeria			
For practice-based works or portfolios, please specify the weighting that should be given to each component			
Proposed Date that Thesis will be Submitted 31/02/2017			
For students whose registration began on or after 1 st October 2015, have you completed the University of Roehampton's Research Student Development Programme? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Awarding Institution <input type="checkbox"/> University of Surrey (date of first registration before 1 st August 2004) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Roehampton University (date of first registration on or after 1 st August 2005)			
Are you currently, or have you been previously, a member of staff at the University of Roehampton? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If 'Yes', please give details below, including role title(s) and start/end dates:			
Signature: 			Date: 23/01/2017

SECTION 2: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE DEPARTMENT

Internal Examiner Name, Postal Address, E-mail Address and Telephone Number: Dr Peter Elfer School of Education, Froebel College, University of Roehampton P.Elfer@roehampton.ac.uk		CV attached <input type="checkbox"/>
External Examiner Name, Postal Address, E-mail Address and Telephone Number: Dr Ian Barron Head of School: Childhood, Youth & Education Studies Faculty of Education Manchester Metropolitan University Room 1.43 Brooks Building 53 Bonsall Street MANCHESTER M15 6GX i.barron@mmu.ac.uk + 44 (0)161 247 2076		CV attached <input type="checkbox"/> If you have any current or previous affiliation with the University of Roehampton, please provide details and dates:
Third Examiner (IF ANY) Name, Postal Address, E-mail Address and Telephone Number:		CV attached <input type="checkbox"/> If you have any current or previous affiliation with the University of Roehampton, please provide details and dates:
Please note any practical considerations relating to the examination (e.g. performances/exhibitions which the examiners will need to attend, SEN requirements, etc.)		
Head of Department signature:		Date:
Date Award Recommended for Ratification by RDB:	Date Award to be Ratified by Senate Awards Committee:	

For completion by department Administrator with responsibility for Research Degrees:

Date received in Department Office: Signature:

If approved by Chair's Action, the Research Degrees Convenor should sign below.

Date approved: Signature:

Report on Oral Examination: Tick to confirm that the examiners 'general comments' and 'requirements for the candidate' have been written in the 'Viva Report Form Feedback for Candidate' document on the laptop.

☐

Recommendation (please tick as appropriate)

Award

☐

Offer award of MPhil degree

☐

Award subject to corrections
(Please indicate the
nature of the corrections)

☐

Offer award of MPhil degree subject to
corrections

☐

No award but permit submission of a
revised thesis or portfolio by
.....(date)
with a further oral

☐

No award but permit submission of
revised thesis or portfolio for MPhil degree
by(date)
with a further oral

☐

No award but permit submission of a
revised thesis or portfolio by
.....(date)
without a further oral

☐

No award but permit submission of
revised thesis or portfolio for MPhil degree
by(date)
without a further oral

☐

Signed
.....
.....

Examiners

No award – terminate registration

☐

.....
.....
.....

Date

If corrections are insisted upon, who should approve
these?

.....

Name of Convenor

If this is a second examination following a resubmission,
please give the date of the first examination:

.....

Abstract

This thesis examines government policy on Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nigeria, which was designed to provide equal access to quality learning for all children irrespective of their background. The underlying empirical research is a case study that focused on the issues of access to and quality of provision available to children from birth to 5 years in Early Childhood Education in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. The study explores these issues drawing on the views and lived experiences of practitioners, parents and policy makers in a group of preschools in Owerri, the state capital of Imo state. The aim is to understand how stakeholders in the case study settings perceive access to and quality of provision available to children, and also to establish if their experiences and views match or are at variance with government policy claims.

Several authors have questioned the universal view of the concept of quality. For instance, the work of Dahlberg et al (2007) and, writing from an African perspective, Nsamenang (2008) have influenced the theoretical stance in this study. Employing an interpretivist approach this study explores the experiences and interpretations of various stakeholders in relation to quality and access in early years education in Owerri. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews with parents and teachers, questionnaires administered on employees of the Ministry of Education Imo state, observation of facilities in settings and analysis of policy documents. Findings revealed significant gaps between government policy and actual practice. Key areas of disconnect between policy and practice were varied experiences for children and families, contradictions and disparities in access to funding of early years education, professional development and conditions of service of early years teachers, and a general dissatisfaction with the state and the quality of provision in early childhood education settings.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	I
TABLE OF CONTENTS	II
LIST OF FIGURES.....	IX
ACRONYMS	X
APPENDICES	XIII
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	XIV
CHAPTER ONE	1
CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY.....	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Overview of the study.....	1
1.2 Evidence base informing the call for changes in the approach to provision	7
1.3 Nigerian context	10
1.4 Rationale.....	16
1.5 Research questions.....	18
1.6 Structure of the thesis	19
CHAPTER TWO	21
CONTEXTUAL ISSUES SHAPING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.....	21
2.0 Introduction	21
2.1 Nigeria: demography, history and population	22
2.2 Economic context	24
2.3 Government, culture and religion	27
2.4 Imo State: Geography, economy, and education	28
2.5 Historical overview of early childhood education in Nigeria.....	29
2.6 Objectives of early childhood education in Nigeria	31
2.7 Types of early childhood provision in Imo State Nigeria.....	32

2.7.1	Community settings.....	34
2.7.2	Government early years settings.....	34
2.7.3	Private owned settings	35
2.7.4	Recent developments in early childhood education in Nigeria	36
2.7.5	Time line in historical developments in early childhood education in Nigeria.....	39
2.7.6	Equity and access to provisions for children (birth-five years) in Nigeria	40
Summary		44
CHAPTER THREE		45
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION		45
3.0	Introduction	45
3.1	Defining early childhood education and care.....	45
3.2	Emphasis and approaches in the provision for children	47
3.3	Global perspectives and interventions in early childhood education.....	51
3.4	Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	59
3.5	Education for All (EFA) outlooks in sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria	64
3.6	Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives on Policy Making.....	69
3.6.1	Theories of Policy Implementation.....	70
3.6.2	The Policymaking Process.....	72
	Agenda Setting	72
	Policy formulation and implementation	73
	Policy Evaluation	75
3.7	Policy transfer in ECE	76
3.8	Involvement of international non-governmental organizations in ECE in Sub-Saharan Africa	77
3.9	Criticisms of INGOs	81
Summary		88
CHAPTER FOUR		89
ISSUES OF QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.....		89
4.0	Introduction	89
4.1	Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care	89
4.2	Introducing the quality debate in early childhood education	91

4.3	Structural and process characteristics of quality.....	94
4.4	Structural elements of quality.....	95
4.4.1	Teacher Training and Professional Development.....	95
4.4.2	Adult Child Ratio	97
4.4.3	Group or Class Size	97
4.5	Process elements of quality in ECE	99
4.5.1	Curriculum	99
4.5.2	Family Involvement	101
4.5.3	Physical Environment	102
	Summary.....	104
	CHAPTER FIVE	105
	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN	105
5.0	Introduction	105
5.1	Positioning the research: epistemological and ontological foundations	107
5.2	Theoretical underpinning of this research	110
5.3	My role as a researcher.....	111
5.4	Research questions.....	113
5.5	Pilot Study.....	113
5.5.1	Pilot study site	114
5.5.2	Pilot sample group.....	114
5.5.3	Methods of data collection for the pilot study.....	114
5.5.4	Lessons learnt from the pilot study that influenced the main study.....	115
5.6	Research methodology	116
5.6.1	Limitations of case study methodology.....	118
5.6.2	Rationale for the use of case study for this inquiry.....	119
5.6.3	Research population.....	121
5.6.4	Fieldwork preparation and logistics	121
5.6.5	Selection and gaining access to settings.....	122
5.6.6	Recruitment of Participants.....	122
5.6.7	Selection of sample and criteria for selection	123
5.6.8	The criteria for selection.....	125
5.6.9	Individual parents in the study	125
5.6.10	Sourcing for materials for this study.....	126
5.7	Method of data collection.....	126

5.7.1	Semi-structured interviews	127
5.7.2	Questionnaires	128
5.7.3	Observation	128
5.7.4	Ethical considerations.....	129
5.7.5	Data analysis	132
5.7.6	Credibility of this study	133
5.7.7	The Influence of my human self in my research.....	133
5.7.8	Key terms and concepts	138
	Subjective meanings	139
	Interpretivism	139
	Process quality	140
	Structural quality	140
	Affordable childcare.....	140
	Summary	140
	CHAPTER SIX.....	141
	DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION	141
6.0	Introduction	141
6.1	Sample demographics.....	142
6.2	Sources of data and gender mix of participants	143
6.3	Educational qualifications and experiences of participants	144
6.4	Profile of government funded and private case study settings.....	147
6.4.1	School 1: MSP (Government Funded Setting)	147
6.4.2	School 2: TWP (Government Funded Setting)	148
6.4.3	School 3: SS (Private Setting)	150
6.4.4	School 4: Olu (Private Setting)	151
6.4.5	School 5: MOD (Government Funded Setting)	153
6.4.6	School 6: Orj (Government Funded Setting).....	155
6.4.7	School 7: UZI (Government Funded Setting)	156
6.4.8	School 8: URT (government funded setting)	157
6.4.9	School 9: BO (Private Setting).....	158
6.5	Analytic strategy in this study	161
6.6	The coding process	162
6.7	Overview of the themes.....	164
6.8	Data Presentation and analysis of findings	168
6.8.1	Analysis of the interview data	168

6.8.2	Disparities in the professional development and conditions of service of ECE practitioners	168
	Training as an opportunity for teachers to adapt to changes in education to be able to 'handle' children	168
	Inconsistencies in opportunities for training	170
	Infrequency of training for teachers	170
	Perception of Favouritism in the selection for training	172
	A general sense of job satisfaction.....	173
6.9	Increased government support and involvement in the provision for children	175
	Government's determination to guarantee access to high quality of learning in ECE	175
	Availability of double shifts in few state schools, as part of the entitlement delivered to children and families	178
	Wide differences exist between government funded and private early childhood provisions	179
	Inequitable access and exclusion of disadvantaged, disabled children and those with learning difficulties in early years settings	180
	Absence of provision for birth-three year-olds in government settings forces families to rely on private for profit child care markets	182
6.10	Quality concerns in children's learning centres	184
	General dissatisfaction with the state of resources in children's learning environment.....	184
	General sense of dissatisfaction with the state of water and electricity supply.....	187
	Dissatisfaction with the state of Learning Materials in children's centres	190
	General sense of dissatisfaction with the state of toilet facilities, poor hygiene and sanitation in settings	191
	General sense of dissatisfaction with the state of play facilities	193
6.11	Disparities in Access to government's funding of early childhood education.....	197
	Inconsistencies in Government funding and provision for children in private and public settings	197
	Access to high quality ECE is limited by cost or affordability, availability and suitability	198
6.12	Parental involvement and effective partnership in setting, as an opportunity for improving children's learning and achievement.....	202
	Parents expression of high levels of satisfaction with their relationship and quality of ECE services in settings.	202
	Parents belief in their voices, equal rights and responsibilities for their children's education and discipline	207
	Parents' perceptions of teachers' qualification and quality in provision	211
	Time spent in settings and children's learning activities was an important consideration for working families .	213
6.13	Changing Family Needs and Patterns Impacts on the Demand for Childcare Services.....	215
	Parents' and teachers' perception of the length of time children spend in school	215

Teachers perceptions of the Influx of children into state schools, on group size, class management and quality of children's' learning	217
6.14 Disparities in Early Childhood Education Curriculum and Minimum Standard that Apply to Settings	222
Variations in programme content and curriculum implementation in settings	222
Safety and Security concerns in ECE settings.....	226
6.15 Inconsistencies in the regulatory system for overseeing quality in ECE	227
Quality assurance in ECE settings.....	227
Ineffectiveness of quality assurance systems in ECE settings	228
Undesired consequences of weak regulation of early years education	229
6.16 Analysis of the questionnaire data.....	230
Respondents perception of curriculum in early years education	231
Funding of ECE	231
Quality control in ECE.....	232
Children's learning environment.....	232
Equity and access in for children in ECE	233
Respondents perception of quality in early years settings	233
Professional development and conditions of service	234
Summary	234
CHAPTER SEVEN	236
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	236
7.1 Introduction	236
7.2 Gaps and contradicting commitments in both structure and process quality.....	237
7.3 Lack of awareness of the government commitments.....	239
7.4 Uneven Provision of Resources and Differences in Learning Environments	241
7.5 Human rights v human capital discourses.....	244
7.6 What perception do stake holders in Imo State have of the 2007 government policy in relation to affordability of early childhood education and care.....	248
7.7 How do these perceptions match government's policies?.....	249
7.8 Significance and implications of the study	251
7.9 Limitations of the study	252

Summary	253
7.10 Recommendations	254
Involvement of stakeholders in the design, planning, and implementation	254
Improve quality through increased budgetary allocation.....	256
Workforce Development.....	256
7.11 Suggestions for further research	256
BIBLIOGRAPHY	258
APPENDICES	283
Appendix A: Interview guide for Parents	283
Appendix B: Interview guide for teachers and proprietors.....	285
Appendix C: Codes used for interviewees in the case study settings	288
Appendix D: Questionnaire on Quality and Access in Early Childhood Education	290
Appendix E Participant Information Sheet.....	293
Appendix F Consent Statement:.....	294

List of figures

Figure 2.1 Map of Nigeria showing states capitals

Figure 2.2 Map of Imo State showing the local governments

Figure 5.1 Illustration of thesis epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods

Case study settings

Figure 6.4.1 School 1: MSP - Pictures of nursery classrooms in MSP setting

Figure 6.4.2 School 2: TWP - Setting showing a nursery classroom

Figure 6.4.3 School 3: SS - School reception, outdoor play area and classrooms

Figure 6.4.4: School 4: Olu - Classrooms and outdoor area in Setting

Figure 6.4.5: School 5: MOD - Showing classroom and outdoor areas

Figure 6.4.6: School 6: Orj - Showing some classrooms

Figure 6.4.7: School 7: UZI - Showing nursery classrooms

Figure 6.4.8: School 8: URAT - Setting showing nursery classrooms

Figure 6.4.9: School 9: BO - Showing nursery classrooms

Acronyms

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
BvLF's	Bernhard van Leer Foundations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CSR	Class Size Ratios
ECCD	National Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCDE	Early Child Care Development and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early childhood Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EFA	Education for All
EPPE	The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education
EST.	Estimate
EYDCC	National Early Years Development and Consultative Committee
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
IECDP	Intersectoral Early Childhood Development Policy
ILO	International labour organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IMF	International Monetary Fund
LGA	Local Government Areas
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NCRIC	National Child Rights Implementation Committee
NERDC	Nigerian Research and Development Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMSECCC	Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres
NPE	National Policy on Education
NPIECD	National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board.
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNWFP	United Nations World Food Programme
UPS	Uninterruptible Power Supply
USA	United States of America
WGECD	Working Group on Early Childhood Development
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSC	World Summit for Children

Appendices

Appendix A Interview guide for parents

Appendix B Interview guide for teachers and proprietors

Appendix C Codes used in the study

Appendix D Questionnaire on quality and access in early childhood education

Appendix E Participant information sheet

Appendix F Consent statement

Acknowledgments

I thank Jehovah-Jireh, God Almighty for giving me the opportunity to complete this PhD programme. To Him be the glory and honour.

I express my profound gratitude to Professor Mathias Urban and Dr. Suzanne Quinn. This great journey wouldn't have been completed without the support and direction you gave. I thank you whole heartedly for the assistance and great opportunities you gave me, words of encouragement, cordial working relationship and your utmost belief in me. More than anything, it gave me the zeal to carry on. Thank you for your sacrifice even when you had no obligation to. You will always be remembered, appreciated and valued. I am grateful to my examiners, Dr. Ian Barron and Dr. Peter Elfer, for their very useful comments during the viva.

Very special thanks goes to my immediate family. I am particularly indebted to Iloba Matthew Aligbe (my beloved husband and life-long friend) for his incredible support and encouragement and for believing in me. My gratitude also goes to Onyedikachukwu and her husband Ronald Kikanme, Ekenedilichukwu, Tochukwu and Chukwufumnanya. Thanks for making my dream come true. I love you all and I dedicate this thesis to you.

I am indebted to my beloved brother Anthony Isiakpona who stood firmly by my family and I throughout our sojourn in the UK. You drove miles upon miles, day and night, just to ensure that my needs are met. Mr T, your support is priceless and my prayer is that God should reward you. I immensely appreciate Precious Fontillo. I call her (Odi ukor namba) for offering help at a very critical time in my life. Thank you so much, your labour of love will not go unrewarded. I greatly appreciate my dear sister Isioma for her support, phone calls and encouraging words, my son Jude Ochei and my beloved daughter Ashiedu who were ever willing to assist. Thank you so much for being there for me.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends. Mr Lambert Ahamefule for his encouragement and never ending words of wisdom. To Mr Ronni Nwabude and Clara Rubiano for their inspiration and for being a great source of strength. I appreciate you all.

I give thanks to Mr & Mrs Chuka Unachukwu. Oby, you have been a great daughter and friend. I will always be grateful to you and your fantastic son Dumebi. Awele Oyibo, you are a rare sister and a great friend. I thank you for your great support. You stood by me throughout this journey. I appreciate Mr & Mrs Oster Aligbe, for their relentless prayers and encouragement. I also thank Mr & Mrs Inigo Aligbe who fervently prayed and blessed my family with their substance. Mr. Onyema Aligbe, Professor Charles Anyakwo and Mr & Mrs Abuchi Davis, I thank you for your prayers and support.

Chapter One

Context and Background of Study

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of early childhood education policies within the Nigerian context and various perspectives on the importance of early childhood education (ECE) for instance (Myers, 2006, World Bank, 2013a). It highlights findings from various studies conducted in the global North, Europe and the global South which have influenced policy reforms globally (Aboud, 2006; Kagitcibasi et al., 2001; Mwaura et al., 2008; Nores & Barnett, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2011b; Rao, 2010; Shonkoff & Richmond, 2009; Sylva et al., 2004; Taiwo & Tyolo, 2002). It also identifies the site of this research and the rationale for the study. This is followed by the research questions and the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Overview of the study

This thesis examines government policies and provision in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Nigeria. It is a case study which should be viewed within the context of recent policy changes aimed at creating access and quality learning for children from birth to 5 years. It explores these issues by drawing on the views and experiences of some stakeholders in a small group of preschools in Owerri the state capital of Imo state. The aim is to understand how stakeholders such as employees of the ministries of education, parents of young children, and early years practitioners in this case study perceive access and quality of provision available to children and also to evaluate if their experiences and views match or are at variance with government policy claims.

My choice of this study is informed by my experiences, first as a teacher in the nursery, primary and secondary levels of education; and second drawing on my awareness and experiences as a student and researcher seeking to specialize and contribute to knowledge in the area of early childhood education. Teaching in different early years settings for about 15 years presented me with the opportunity of experiencing first hand, wide disparities between settings, unequal access to

provisions and the limitations children and families face as a result of poverty and high cost of education. Also glaring was the poor quality of infrastructures; lack of material resources, lack of qualified teachers, high participation of private sector, very low-paid staff as well as a highly unregulated sector of education. A case study of early years programmes and policies in Imo State Nigeria may illustrate the changes that have occurred in terms of creating access and providing high quality learning for children from birth to 5 years since the introduction of the national policy on early years learning in 2007. The interest in stakeholders' perspectives is to represent the views and voices of actors whose role I consider very significant in educational policy development and implementation in Nigeria, yet is silent or sometimes ignored. Vargas-Barón (2005) posits that ECD [early childhood development] policies or policy frameworks are very effective when they are developed with the full participation of governments, institutions of civil society, parents, and communities.

Early childhood education is recognized as a crucial support for children's learning and development. This is because of the role it plays in improving the life chances of children (McKey et al., 1985; Sylva et al., 2004). It provides a strong base for future development and lifelong learning and prepares children for the transition from home to school and into primary education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004; UNESCO, 2007). According to Siraj-Blatchford, Smith & Samuelson (2010, cited in Hor, 2012), ECE is an important stage for inculcating personal habits and social values in children while The World Bank (2010) quoted Kiris Mardi, Deputy Regional Director for United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as saying that:

ECD is a powerful equalizer which helps to overcome socio economic disparities by insuring equality of opportunities for all children before they enter primary school. Investing in ECD programmes is more cost efficient than addressing later in life the issues of poor health status, drop out, delinquency. Therefore the main theme of this conference is not just a need to invest in early years but to ensure equality of opportunity for every child (p.211).

Participation in high quality early childhood education particularly in an enriching and stimulating environment, impacts positively on the cognitive, social and emotional development of children and lays the foundation for future attainments and educational outcomes; especially for the disadvantaged and most vulnerable children (Barnett, 2008; McKey et al., 1985; Mustard, 2006; Sylva et al., 2004; World Bank, 2011c; Young et al., 2007). These views have led to an increase in the demand for improved services with many countries setting goals, developing new policies and frameworks for children's learning and campaigners at national and international levels pushing for changes in the approach to provision for children.

This view is shared by Neuman & Devercelli (2012: 21) who observed a 'proliferation of national and intersectoral (or integrated) ECD policies in countries around the world, including those in Sub-Saharan Africa'. For instance in 2010, the government of Ethiopia adopted a new policy framework to provide a holistic and comprehensive approach to the development of children from the prenatal period to seven years of age; Kenya's National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework a multisectoral ECD strategy, was developed in 2006 while Tanzania's ECD policy, the Intersectoral Early Childhood Development Policy (IECDP), was drafted in 2010. In Ghana, the National Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy Framework for children from birth to age 8 was adopted in 2004. Nigeria adopted the Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (IECDP) in 2007 and has witnessed changes in both the demand for provision for children and families as well as increase in private sector control which is a dominant feature in its early childhood education sector.

Acknowledging the role of policy drivers or development partners in changing the approach to provision for children, Neuman & Devercelli (2012: 25) noted that stakeholders such as UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank have influenced the development of national ECE policies in a number of countries through providing 'financial and technical support required to address both the fragmentation and gaps in existing policies, laws, and programmes as well as addressing the needs

of young children'. Another partner identified in Sub-Saharan Africa is the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD). This group 'encouraged national ECD policy development in a number of countries through regional and cross-country assessments, and capacity-building activities' (Aidoo, 2008 cited in Neuman & Devercelli, 2012: 25). Similarly, Vargas-Barón noted that the ADEA Working Group, World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF provided 'technical support, grants, training workshops, national consultants, and consultation and consensus-building meetings for National Policy Planning for three Francophone nations namely Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Senegal. Policies in all three countries have since been approved and lessons learned have been shared with other countries' (2008: 25).

While there may be overwhelming support for improved services, there is the argument that most ECE goals are not entirely based on the interest of children, for instance, Urban (2009) noted that though ECE is receiving unparalleled attention with countries setting goals and making effort to improve services for children, most goals are economically or politically driven. He cited the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on ECE policies in twenty countries which gave the reasons for governments' focus on ECE policies as the desire to increase women's participation in labour force; reduction of child poverty and educational disadvantage; reconciling work and family responsibilities and confronting demographic challenges such as falling fertility rates and aging populations (OECD, 2006a).

Creating access to high quality learning for children in Early Childhood Education (ECE) may have become a global phenomenon with a general aim of creating universal access and high quality education for all, however its definition, emphasis, and governance varies considerably across different countries and depends largely on the objectives and priority of agencies and organizations providing support and funding for the programmes. Some of the definitions include Early Childhood Development (ECD) a term used by UNICEF, the World Bank and The World Health

Organization. The emphasis here is on holistic and integrated development and comprises of programmes in health, nutrition and psychosocial development. The EU refers to it as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). Here the definition includes preschool education and care and is sometimes part of primary school settings. UNESCO refers to it as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This definition equally includes education and care (Education International, 2010: 10). Governance and different titles used to describe teaching staff in ECE in some countries will be discussed in chapter three.

Literature suggests that in spite of different laws and changing policies in ECE across the globe, progress is not at the same pace (Melhuish & Petrogiannis, 2006) and a majority of the world's children particularly the most disadvantaged groups, are still unable to access quality early childhood services (UNESCO, 2009). For instance, Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria (which is the focus of this study), is said to lag behind much of the rest of the developing world in terms of access to ECE (Orkin Yadete & Woodhead, 2012) with only two out of five children living in areas with ECE programmes (UNESCO, 2010b). Lack of access to provision for children in Sub-Saharan Africa could be attributed to the impact of wars, poor governance, abject or absolute poverty, poor resources and illiteracy. The report equally suggests that while there is considerable increase in enrolment for four year olds in ECE across OECD countries, enrolment rates vary from about 95% or more in countries such as Belgium, United Kingdom, France, Iceland and Netherlands to about 60% in Australia, Canada and Finland. Again enrolment for 3 year olds is about 100% in France, 99% in Belgium 95% in Iceland but 10% in countries such as Australia, Canada and Switzerland (OECD, 2012b).

It is worth noting that there are areas of variation in the organisation of early childhood systems in each of these countries with childcare for children below three being under a 'split' system model, and those for children between three to the compulsory school age being under one ministry or agency 'unitary' model (Bennett, 2011; Urban et al., 2012). In the split model, responsibility for the

delivery of children's services is divided among a number of ministries or agencies. According to Melhuish (2014: 35), 'the differences lie in the organisational forms, the level of state subsidy, the responsible authorities; and the age at which children access provision. In many countries public authorities offer subsidised places from a very early age, often from the end of statutory maternity leave'. Bennett (2011: 2) noted that 'services in 'spilt' systems are fragmented and lack coherence for children and families'. Education International (2010) suggests that the gaps in provision could be attributed to the lack of investment and poor coordination among the diverse bodies and actors providing and organizing care for children.

Progress is being made with some countries developing plans and frameworks to deliver access to provision for children. For instance, Nigeria initiated a number of reforms including the Integrated National Policy for Early Childhood Education which emphasizes the provision of high quality education for children from birth to 5 years. However, these reforms were informed by the findings from different studies conducted in the global North and Europe as well as other initiatives on the international stage such as the World declaration of Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The new framework in Nigeria promises equal access to quality learning for children irrespective of real or imagined disability or background. In line with the reforms, ECE is currently within the framework of Basic Education alongside primary and junior secondary schools in Nigeria. The implication is that like other categories of basic education, provision should be free and universal, thus creating state funded preschool places for children. The extent to which the government's claim is true of early childhood education in Nigeria, the category of children who benefit from existing provision and the extent to which this translates into action will be discussed later in this study.

Within the context of the reforms in Nigeria, this case study seeks to explore access and quality of learning available to children in ECE. It focuses on the views of a group of stakeholders in a small group of preschools within Owerri the state capital of Imo State. There is paucity of research on

stakeholders' perspectives on ECE in Imo state. This qualitative study would therefore illuminate diverse viewpoints, real life experiences, values, expectations, and existing challenges for families and children. Stakeholders' perspectives are considered relevant in this study because of the position they occupy either as recipients or beneficiaries who are directly affected by educational legislation, policies and programmes, or as intermediaries in the policy process. Educational policies are delivered by teachers and service providers and developed for families therefore their experiences could reveal the reasons for successes or failures, effectiveness of existing government policies and legislations particularly in a society such as Nigeria where ECE is private sector driven and where legislation is passed without consultation with stakeholders.

1.2 Evidence base informing the call for changes in the approach to provision

Different studies conducted in the global North, the global South, and Europe highlight the importance of quality learning and care in early childhood education. See for instance, The Turkish Early Enrichment Project (Kagitcibasi, Sunar and Bekman, 2001); Evaluation of the Madrassa Preschool Program in Kenya, East Africa (Mwaura et al., 2008); Evaluation of Preschool Program in Rural Bangladesh (Aboud, 2006); Influence of Preschool Quality on the Development of 4 year old Children from Poor Rural Families in South India (Rao, 2010); Effect of Preschool Education on Academic Performance in Primary School in Botswana (Taiwo & Tyolo, 2002); The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project conducted in Ypsilanti, Michigan (Schweinhart, Barnes & Weikart, 1993); The Carolina Abecedarian Study (Campbell & Burchinal, 2008); The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) in England (Sylva et al., 2004); The Relation of Child-Care Quality to Children's Cognitive and Social Development (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001); Relating Quality of Centre-Based Child Care to Early Cognitive and Language Development Longitudinally (Burchinal et al., 2000); and The Impact of Head Start on Children, Families and Communities (Schweinhart et al., 2005).

Albeit some of these studies stress the need for improved provision and high quality learning for children, they have been criticized for reasons such as their relevance and functionality beyond the immediate geographical communities where they have been developed, economic and political dynamics of societies as well as differences in cultural and traditional values (Myers, 2006; Woodhead, 1998; Nsamenang, 2006; Smith, Grima, Gaffney, Powell, Masses & Barnett, 2000; Moss & Pence, 1994; Penn, 2011). These scholars also questioned the methodological approach of some of the studies. For instance, they noted that findings were derived from a narrow population of children from North America, Europe and other western countries that comprise a lower percentage of all children in the world. Yet, they are put forward by interest groups as the rationale for changes in policies and legislation and have impacted on the approach to provision as well as the conceptualizations of children's learning in different parts of the world.

Generally, the focus and discourse of governments and interest groups at the international, national, and local levels is on initiating innovative programmes and intervention strategies that would provide access to high quality and affordable learning for children. These reforms are at various levels including Early Childhood Education, and are underpinned by the perception that equitable access to high quality education is a tool for transforming the lives of children and families and for breaking the vicious circle of intergenerational poverty and inequalities (UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO, 2007). These reforms are based on the notion that participation in high quality early childhood education impacts positively on the cognitive, social and emotional development of children and lays the foundation for future attainments and educational outcomes (see for instance (Nores & Barnett, 2010; Shonkoff, 2009; Sylva et al., 2004; World Bank, 2011c; Young et al., 2007).

According to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2007), ECE ensures that children have positive experiences and that their needs for health, stimulation and support are met. This is in line with Johnson & Kossykh (2008) who emphasize the relationship between

achievements in adulthood and the cognitive and social abilities developed in childhood. Johnson & Kossykh, (2008) are of the view that good cognitive abilities have a link with educational accomplishments which in turn leads to higher wages. Social skills linked to attention are related to educational attainment and social adjustment and are associated with improved labour market participation, higher wages and reduced likelihood of being involved in crime. Similarly, others have noted the fiscal, economic and social benefits of early intervention for children who live in poverty (Engle et al., 2011; Heckman, 2006; Lynch, 2004). Some other streams of research from the USA which highlight the long term benefits of high quality early ECE as stated earlier include the Abecedarian project, Perry High Scope and Prenatal/Early Infancy studies. As stated earlier, these studies have been continually referenced by different interest groups as the basis for promoting intervention in children's services. Various arguments and criticisms based on these studies will be discussed fully in chapter 3.

Albeit the call for intervention in ECE on the basis of economic and social returns on investment as suggested by some interest groups may be gaining ground, some scholars argue that some of these findings have been applied uncritically to the global South. This therefore raises concerns about the relevance of transferred policies and programmes in meeting the needs of children and families in the global south. For instance, some have argued that the rationales and research evidence used to justify investment in programmes that are adopted and transferred to the global South by interest groups and campaigners such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank and which have formed the premise for the call for changes in policies came from studies conducted mainly in the global North, particularly the USA, and parts of Europe. **The argument is that the information from these studies are not generalizable for a variety of reasons. For example, parenting styles that are based on western ideas; a lack of consideration of the contexts of some of the study conditions or interventions, as well as the differing cultural values and issues of resourcing in the global South (Nsamenang, 2006, Penn, 2004).** Various global initiatives such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) the World

Conference on Education for All (World Conference on Education for All, 1990) and the Dakar Framework for action a decade later as well as the Millennium Goals (MDGs) which stressed the need for universal basic education and access to high quality education for all children, have all contributed to and strengthened the call for investment in children's programmes. The impact of these initiatives will be discussed more fully in chapter three.

1.3 Nigerian context

The 1977 National Policy on Education in Nigeria officially recognized early childhood education. It describes it as the education provided for children before the official age of starting school (6 years) and which takes place in crèche, nursery and kindergarten (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1977). Regrettably, it only catered for children between 3-5 years old, and limited the responsibilities of government towards pre-primary education to the training of qualified staff, development of suitable curriculum, supervision and control of institutions to ensure quality and adherence to stipulated standards. However, it recognized and encouraged private participation in early childhood education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998). While this document formed the basis for the official recognition of early years education and care in Nigeria, it can best be described as a guiding policy instrument rather than a legally binding one. There was no legal obligation relating to establishing early years centres and no repercussions or penalties in the event of violation or non-compliance. There were no quality of staff and national quality standards which would serve as a baseline for assessing settings. This decision left the interpretation and management of early years education completely in the hands of private and for-profit operators, communities, religious, and voluntary organizations. It had huge implications in terms of cost, quality and access for children and families. Government support for private participation may have led to an increase in the number of early years settings, but it failed to guarantee access and affordable ECE.

In response to the global call for change and as a re-affirmation of the country's commitment to both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child (UNCRC); the World Declaration of 'Education for All and Learning starts at Birth' (1990) and the Dakar Framework for action (2000), Nigeria, like other countries of the world initiated some reforms and implemented changes in both the framework and approach to early childhood education. According to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), the Federal Government introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999 to ensure 'unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual. Thus the poor, socially marginalized and vulnerable groups can effectively develop their full capacities and potentials' (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013: 3).

The language of the Nigerian Research and Development Council in their statement to ensure access and equity has a semblance of commitment to basic education but as promising as it might sound, this optimism is not shared by many. For instance, in a research paper titled *Early Childhood Education: Its Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigerian Educational System*, (Nakpodia, 2011: 161) noted that many years after ECE policy documents were introduced, government proposals and measures to be put in place to enable it achieve the objectives of ECE 'are still mere paper formalities'. The argument put forth is that achieving this claim is doubtful taking into consideration the scale or scope of government commitment in terms of funding which impacts hugely on access and quality of provision for children. While governmental determination may be to provide 'unfettered access and equity in education', its political will to see educational programmes and policies through lags behind.

Quality education which is considered a tool for breaking the vicious circle of intergenerational poverty (UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO, 2007) continues to be out of the reach of many poor and socially marginalized children particularly in a poorly regulated education sector and a predominantly for profit childcare providers who charge fees that effectively exclude low income

families from education. This gives credence to the view of Nakpodia (2011) who decried the 'over commercialization' of ECE in Nigeria. He stated that 'most nursery schools even charge higher fees than what many model secondary schools and even Federal universities do charge and the extraordinarily prohibitive cost has not been reciprocally matched by an encouraging provision of facilities and basic equipment' (Nakpodia, 2011: 161). Albeit there is increase in the number of children attending ECE as stated by the Federal Ministry of Education, reports regarding school enrolment and attendance in Nigeria suggest that many children particularly those from low income families and disadvantaged backgrounds have no access to early childhood education and care (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009a). Again, the 2012 EFA global monitoring report ranks Nigeria as first on the list of the world's out-of-school children with a total of 10.5 million. It had 3.6 million more children out of school in 2010 than in 2000 (UNESCO, 2012a).

Not much is known about the socially marginalized and vulnerable groups in Nigeria as a result of the difficulty in collecting accurate national data which marks the starting point and evidence base that could inform planning and implementation of educational policies and programmes. Ololube (2007) and Gbenu (2012) observed that this lack of accurate statistical data is in part responsible for the failure of educational programmes and policies Nigeria. Providing equitable access to education particularly for the vulnerable and marginalised requires addressing pertinent and policy-relevant issues such as the existing base line data on the population of marginalized and vulnerable children in Nigeria, their precise situation and challenges faced. It requires a legal framework or regulatory mechanisms established to engage with, protect, and monitor the progress of these groups at different geographical areas both at federal, state and local government levels. Equitable access also requires that priority be given to the internally displaced population (either as a result of inter-community clashes, religious crisis, and most recently the terrorist attacks of Boko Haram or Niger Delta militants) and above all, it also calls for identifying groups that are most vulnerable and the degree of their vulnerability.

The political and socio-economic structure of Nigeria is known to foster inequality, poverty and low quality life which impacts on vulnerable groups. Described as one of the most unequal societies in the world (British Council Nigeria & UKaid, 2012: iv), there is an uneven distribution of wealth and power which continuously promotes inequality and widens the gap between the rich and poor (Makoju et al., 2005; Ogbeide & Agu, 2015). Nigeria has a legacy of poor funding of education and non-provision of the most basic social amenities. For instance, Ololube (2007:42) noted that 'under-funding and systemic corruption are major obstacles to educational reforms in Nigeria'. He argues that budgetary allocations for the education sector remains a concern as it prevents proper planning from taking place. Evidently, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund recommendation of 26% budgetary allocation to education is not adhered to. The resultant effect is that even where schools exist, quality of provision is sub-standard.

As part of its strategy of promoting access and improving the quality of provision for children, a national curriculum titled Integrated Early Childhood Development (IECD) was introduced in 2007 for children from birth-5 years. The Nigerian Research and Development Council suggested that the rationale for the curriculum was backed by the outcome of the study conducted jointly by NERDC/UNICEF in 2003. The study revealed inadequacies and the poor state of early years education, led to the development of the Minimum Standards for ECE Centres in Nigeria and highlighted the need for a curriculum that was comparable with other good curricula around the world. It also identified other influences on ECE such as the issues of globalization, information technology and deregulation (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007). Going by this new policy in ECE, it is mandatory for all government funded primary schools to establish early years centres to cater for children between birth-5 years. Explicitly stated in this framework is the determination to harmonize practice, ensure equal access to quality and affordable early years education for all children in Nigeria irrespective of gender, religious affiliation, geographical location, social and economic background. It is also meant to promote the physical,

social, emotional and intellectual wellbeing of all children (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007).

Some other reforms affecting children include the Child Rights Act (2003) which recognizes the status and rights of every Nigerian child irrespective of disability and provides measures to restore confidence, self-esteem and protection against abuse. The Universal Basic Education Act (2004) which integrates pre-school education into the UBE programme. Under this Act, all public primary schools are to have pre-primary school linkages to cater for children from birth-five year olds. It is meant to be free or non-fee paying and an integral part of the UBE programme. Under this provision, 5% of the Federal Government's UBE intervention fund to states is to be allocated to pre-primary care for children between the ages of 3-5 years. Other reforms include National policy on gender in Basic Education (2007), Guidelines for identification of gifted children (2006) and the Implementation Plan for Special Needs Education Strategy (2007). The new approach to Early Childhood Education and Care is intended to 'improve the care and support given to young children at the community level, give every Nigerian child a good head start in life' (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007: 1). The achievement of these reforms would be through inter-sectoral collaboration at different levels. For instance, the federal, state and local government levels and in partnership with non-governmental organizations (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013).

Providing equal access and high quality education that yields positive outcomes for children is at the core of policy programmes and initiatives in early childhood education across different countries but consensus on interpreting and measuring what constitutes 'high quality' education remains elusive. It is a relative term with varied meanings and subject to various interpretations by different stakeholders even within the same society. These differences in opinion reflect in various suggestions proffered by researchers and educationists on what constitutes best practice and approach in early years settings. It has been argued that no set of practices or approach can best

define high quality in early years learning (Woodhead, 1998; Dahlberg et al., 2007). The argument is that quality is context specific and is influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors and is shaped by what each society perceives to be the needs of children and families at a given time. Moss & Pence (1994) equally noted that quality reflects the agendas, beliefs, needs and interest of various stakeholders in children's services. In the same light, others have noted that quality is linked with socio-cultural expectations and covers wide areas such as quality of governance, structural and process quality, educational concepts and practice (curriculum), child outcomes, community and parent participation (Myers, 2006; UNESCO, 2012b).

In Nigeria, provision for children in ECE remains dominated by private individuals, religious institutions like churches and mosques, local communities and for-profit organizations. Achieving equal access and the same quality of learning for children in a society where a majority of early years settings are predominantly under private sector control and profit oriented organizations, with no subsidies from government, remains problematic. Penn & Lloyd (2012) describe this as a 'raw' childcare market, a situation where there is minimal or no government intervention in early years education. They noted that these forms of childcare markets are found in low income countries where there are no curbs or control on childcare entrepreneurial activities; no routine information collected; no regulation and no subsidies' (Penn & Lloyd, 2012: 173). They argue that raw childcare markets aggravate inequality. Political, technological, demographic, social, religious, economic environment and changing family structures in Nigeria have continued to influence the development of early childhood education and provision for children.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to explore how changes in ECE in Nigeria impact on the provision for children between the ages of birth-5 years in Imo State. I am particularly interested in analysing the perception of key stakeholders in relation to the 2007 National Policy on Early Childhood Education and governments claim of delivering equal access and high quality learning for children (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007).

1.4 Rationale

The Government's participation in early childhood education offered some low income families the opportunity to access pre-school education. Nevertheless, some have argued that provision falls short of actual demand for education and care in terms of infrastructures, equitable distribution of resources, ECE workforce and funding (Ali-Akpajiak Sofu & Pyke, 2003; Ejie, 2006; Ige, 2011b; Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007; Osakue, 2011). Existing records show that many children in Nigeria are deprived of basic requirements such as education, water, electricity, health care, nutrition, good roads and other social amenities (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007). The Federal Ministry of Education, noted huge disparities across the country in terms of quality, physical and economic access as a result of cultural differences, high level of private sector participation, rural-urban dichotomy and economic status of families.

The report also noted disparities between the expected and actual enrolment for children in early years education for example, the expected enrolment is 22 million children but the actual figure enrolled is 2.02 million. This leaves a staggering 19.98 million out of school. Similarly, out of the 3-5 million school-aged nomadic migrant children, only 450,000 are enrolled leaving about 3.1 million out of school (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009a). The 2008-2009 human development report on Nigeria by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states that 25% of children are stunted due to malnutrition and that out of 59.1 million children in Nigeria, about 44% suffer from lack of drinking water, 26% from poor sanitation and about 44% lack shelter. This bleak picture raises the following questions and some more. Does equal access really exist and can quality of education and care truly be the same for all children particularly the rural, deprived children and those from low income families?

Creating equal access would mean making childhood services accessible and open to full participation for every child and family irrespective of special needs or disabilities. It means having

the same privileges or rights; equitable for all and at the same time recognizing and accommodating for uniqueness and individual differences, and giving all children equal access to education and care, free of prejudice or discrimination to achieve their potentials (Moss & Penn, 1996). While acknowledging the relevance of these conditions in children's learning environment, existing literature on early years education and care in Nigeria suggests that these attributes are almost non-existent in the provision of education and care for children (Newman & Obed, 2015; Onu et al., 2010; Salami, 2016; Sooter, 2013). Some questions worth asking at this juncture therefore are what are the major constraints to equal access to high quality learning? How can government effectively address the rural - urban disparities inherent in early childhood education? Why have knowledge transfers and best practice approaches recommended by international agencies failed to yield the desired result in the Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular? Why has government continued to claim access and quality exists for children even in the face of overwhelming evidence that it does not? Writing on the state of rural education in Nigeria, Anyaegbu et al., (2004) noted that in spite of efforts aimed at improving education, nothing significant has been achieved because people are still uneducated and rural education remains neglected and in shambles. Therefore, gaining the perspectives of stakeholders will help us to better understand how policy has or has not been realised.

This study examines the complexities of early years education policies in Nigeria and the extent to which these policies have improved services and provision for children. My focus is on the perspectives of a small number of stakeholders in a group of preschools in Owerri. There is a paucity of research on their perspectives on quality and access for children in Imo state. This study seeks to fill the theoretical and empirical gap that exists by conducting an in-depth analysis of existing provision. The purpose of this study therefore is first to examine the perceptions and interpretations of key stakeholders in relation to quality and access and government's claims of creating access to quality learning. The second aim is to analyse the process and structural elements of quality in the case study settings and how they impact on the quality of provision available to

children. The third aim is to analyse the cost and affordability of early years education and its impact on access to provision.

1.5 Research questions

To achieve the objectives of this study which is to analyse the issues of access and quality of provision available to children in ECE in Imo state as perceived by some key stakeholders, the following research questions are explored:

1. What perception do stakeholders in Imo State have of the 2007 Government Policy on Early Childhood Education and Care in Nigeria in relation to
 - i Process and structure as dimensions of quality
 - ii Affordability of Early Childhood Education and Care
2. How do these perceptions match government policies?

These questions are meant to elucidate the views and constructions of some stakeholders on quality control mechanisms, cost and funding of ECE and current state of provision in settings and how these perceptions match with or are at variance with the government's claims. The process and structure dimensions of quality such as staff training and development, remuneration, child-teacher ratio, class size, classroom materials and curriculum, group size and management, curriculum, environment, children's experiences and partnership with families are addressed.

Employing a qualitative approach, nine case study settings (three private and six government funded early years settings) were purposively selected for the study. This choice represents urban and semi-urban samples. Findings from this small scale study are not intended to be generalizable to the entire population of early years settings in Imo state, but rather the findings generate knowledge and a better understanding of the issues of access and quality of provision available to children in the case study settings, and these understandings can help us to contemplate how

improvements to access and provision of early childhood education might be made. By taking into consideration the viewpoints of stakeholders, this project will help to make visible the perspectives of people who are often marginalised in relation to policies and will help to make the voices of those stakeholders more audible.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter one introduces the study, highlights different views on the importance of ECE, and provides evidence which has shaped government policies and on which the global call for intervention is premised. The context and background of the study outlines changes and reforms in early childhood education in Nigeria. This chapter also presents the rationale and research questions for the study.

Chapter two focuses on contextual issues that shape ECE in Nigeria. It presents the demographic, economic, historical, political structure and population of Nigeria and Imo state. The aim is to situate the study within its context. Current ECE policy objectives and the national framework for ECE in Nigeria is discussed.

Chapter three presents the literature review for the study. It situates ECE within the global context. It also presents global perspectives and interventions in early childhood education, various definitions of early childhood education, a review of issues such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiatives and their influence on the discourse of ECE in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The role of International Non-Governmental Organizations in transferring research evidence and knowledge between the global North and South as well as the implications and criticisms of such transfers are discussed.

Chapter four presents the discourse of quality in early childhood education. It also discusses the quality debate and multiple meanings of quality as well as the structural and process indicators of quality in early years education.

Chapter five presents the research methods and design, the epistemological and ontological stance, and the theoretical framework which informed the approach to the study and analysis of data. In this chapter I discuss my roles as a researcher, the research questions explored, and give an account of the pilot study for this project. I present an explanation and rationale for the research methodology and the methods of data collection. I also describe my approach to ethics, data analysis, the credibility of the study, and my influence in the research and some key concepts.

Chapter six presents the data analysis and findings of the research. This was based on key themes and issues identified in the process of analysing the information gathered through questionnaires, observations and transcribed interview scripts.

Chapter seven presents the discussion of the findings. It highlights stakeholders' perceptions of the 2007 Integrated National Policy on Early Childhood Development in relation to process and structure as dimensions of quality. It presents observed policy gaps and challenges encountered by stakeholders. In this final chapter I discuss the limitations of the study, its contribution to knowledge, reflections and thoughts on the study, as well as recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

Chapter Two

Contextual Issues Shaping Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

2.0 Introduction

The introductory chapter presented the background to this study and highlighted some studies conducted in the global North which informed changes in the landscape of early childhood education globally as well as in Nigeria. In this chapter the historical, economic, demographic and political structures of Nigeria and Imo state are discussed. The aim is to situate the study within its context and also to highlight the state of infrastructures and social services and how these factors influence the educational policies and programmes within the Nigerian context. This is followed by the historical development of early childhood education, types of provision, equity and access in early years education within the Nigerian context.

Internal and external factors influence public policies including ECE in Nigeria. Internal factors such as technological developments, economic and political trends, unemployment, urbanization and demographic shifts with constant movement of people within the country, have altered family structures and extended family systems where care and education of children previously seen as the role of women and the extended families is now in the public domain. The emergence of single parent families and two-parent working families has continued to create the need for improved provision and services for children. External influences such as globalization, membership of United Nations, activities of international organizations such UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP and global initiatives such as EFA, MDG and UNCRC equally impact tremendously on policies and programmes in Nigerian society.

2.1 Nigeria: demography, history and population

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and among the 15 largest countries in the world (Nwakonobi, 2007: 10). Covering an area of 913,073 square kilometres (356,669 square miles), it is located in the West of Africa and is bounded by Niger in the North, Cameroon and Chad in the east and Republic of Benin west and its coastline to the south by the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria has two major seasons namely the rainy season which is experienced between March to mid-October and the dry season from late October to early March. To a great extent, the climate in Nigeria shapes the economic activities and ways of life of its people particularly the extent to which people engage in farming, a major occupation of the rural dwellers, which is controlled by the distribution and length of rainfall that varies from one region to the other.

Historically, Nigeria a former British Colony became independent in the year 1960. The Nigerian First Republic was established on 1 October, 1960. The first civilian government remained in power until it was deposed through a military coup in January 1966. Thereafter, Nigerians experienced about sixteen years of military rule, before a transition to civilian government in 1999. The epoch of colonization left a legacy of formal education through the activities of the missionaries who introduced churches and schools in major cities in the country primarily as a base for disseminating the Christian religion. Imam (2012: 182) suggests that one of the achievements of the Christian missionaries, was the introduction of western education for the propagation of the gospel. Another legacy of the missionaries identified by Ozigi & Ocho (1981 cited in Imam, 2012,) was the translation of the bible into indigenous languages.

This view is contested by some scholars and critics who argue that although colonialism ushered in western education, the quality and content offered was tailored to suit the missionaries. For instance, Sulaiman (2012: 84) purports that churches and schools were established for the sole purpose of evangelizing the natives and their main focus was reading and writing. This view is shared by Akanbi (2012: 359) who said that the main goal of the missionaries was not the provision

of sound education rather recipients or products of the schools were trained to serve the providers as clerks, messengers and interpreters. Curricula were determined by each denomination and were drawn to suit their needs. Akanbi argues that the type of education provided had limitations in terms of content of instruction because it failed to produce the required workforce to match the technological developments at the time as well as leaders capable of ruling or governing the country. This led to intervention in education by the colonial government through the establishment of ordinances and education laws that regulated the activities of both government and missionary owned schools.

Nigeria has 36 States with Abuja as the Federal Capital territory. It also has about 774 local government areas. According to the 2006 official census figure, Nigeria has a population of about 140,431,790 and an estimated population as at February 2010 is 154,774,091 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010: 14). According to Nwakonobi (2007) and National Bureau of Statistics (2010), about 70-80% of the population in Nigeria are rural dwellers and almost all are engaged in subsistence farming while about 30% dwell in urban areas. The implication is that a majority of the population earn low wages, live in poverty and experience a low quality of life, and there is a poor quality of infrastructures and social amenities such as good roads, water, and electricity. This poor general outlook, has effect on the provision of education at all levels in Nigeria.

Map of Nigeria with the states and capitals



Figure 2.1 Source: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/nigeria>

2.2 Economic context

The economic structure in Nigeria has a strong impact on its educational policies and programmes in terms of infrastructures and quality of provision particularly in ECE. Edward & Konstantinos (2006) note that economic factors in countries are essential for two reasons. First, without a strong growing economy countries cannot afford the best services for children. The second reason is linked to the human capital argument; that is, the recognition that high quality ECE programmes are crucial in economic development of countries based on the fact that the human capital created as a result of high quality ECE is very important in increasingly technological and knowledge-based economies.

Nigeria, sometimes referred to as the 'Giant of Africa' has the most known reserves of petroleum and gas in Sub-Saharan Africa. Petroleum is an important aspect of the national economy. With the oil boom, Nigeria experienced positive growth and there was investment in infrastructures. Prior to the oil boom of the 1970s, agriculture was a crucial sector of the economy. It accounted for 92.7% of the country's exports and employed about 80% of the nation's workforce. Cash crops like rubber, cocoa, groundnuts and palm produce were important sources of government revenue and foreign exchange earners. Disappointingly, this sector has witnessed decline in production in recent years (Izuchukwu, 2011; Ugwu & Kanu, 2012).

According to Central Intelligence Agency (2017), the labour force as of 2017 is estimated at 58.8 million (2016 est.). The labour force by occupation is: Industry 10%, Services 20% and Agriculture 70%. The Unemployment rate in Nigeria is 23.9% (2011 est.) and about 70% (2010est) of the population live below the poverty line. In terms of women's involvement in the labour force, the British Council Nigeria & UKaid (2012: iv) indicated that 'women compose the majority of informal sector worker. 54 million of Nigeria's 80.2 million women live and work in rural areas where they provide 60-79% of the work force'. The National Bureau of Statistics, (2010:60) equally noted that in 2007 only 32.5% of women were employed in the (non-agricultural) private sector off-farm activities.

Despite its huge oil reserve, natural gas, petroleum, tin, iron ore, columbite, coal, limestone lead and zinc, paradoxically it is one of the poorest countries in the world with high scale corruption, political, ethnic and religious tensions. Nwezeaku (2010, cited in Ogbonna & Appah, 2012: 35) is of the view that 'there is under development in Nigeria and evidence of this could be found in the poor human developmental and economic indices, poor income distribution, unrest in the oil producing areas of the country, endemic corruption, unemployment and poverty'. He went further to note that there is high rate of inflation, a poor standard of living and a high rate of unemployment. The 2011 United Nations Development index suggests that Nigeria fares badly in

global development indicators. It says that human poverty index is 41.6. This ranks Nigeria as 54th out of 78 poorest countries in the world while the Human Development index ranked Nigeria as 156th out of 187 countries alongside countries like Kenya, Sao Tome and Principe.

Several attempts at economic reforms have been made. For instance, in the year 2000, Nigeria signed a stand-by agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF) which led to a \$1billion credit and a debt restructuring deal with the Paris club. Failure to meet spending and exchange rate targets led to its withdrawal from IMF. However, in 2005, it won Paris Club approval for a debt-relief deal which got rid of \$18 billion of debt in exchange for \$12 billion in payments – a total package worth \$30 billion (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). Disappointingly, reforms embarked upon by various governments have failed to bring about meaningful changes for the populace. There is high level of insecurity, under-development, and economic crisis in Nigeria. Okonjo-Iweala, the Minister of Finance from about 11 July 2011 to 29 May 2015 announced that Nigeria's external debt burden as at the first quarter of 2013 is estimated to be about \$6.67 billion (Ujah, 8th June, 2013). According to Okojie (2002, cited in British Council Nigeria & UKaid, 2012: 10) about 54% of the population live in poverty. He went further to state that Nigeria is among the thirty most unequal countries in the world with respect to income distribution (British Council Nigeria & UKaid, 2012).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2001, cited in Ali-Akpajiak Sofo & Pyke, 2003) reported that although Nigeria is the 7th largest oil producing country in the world, the incidence of poverty is very high. It remains one of the poorest with majority of the population living in absolute poverty and wide gap between the rich and the poor. Rural areas are very deprived and lack social services like education, roads, electricity, water, health services. Ali-Akpajiak Sofo & Pyke (2003) went further to say that social-welfare performance indicators suggests that Nigeria ranks among the poorest in the world and one of the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa. Revenue allocation to the social sector is insufficient and the state of social services attests

to that. About 70% of the total population live below the poverty line of less than \$1 per day (pp. 5-7). The World Bank report (cited in Ali-Akpajiak Sofo & Pyke, 2003) says that the poor in Nigeria have cash income that can barely provide food, water, fuel, shelter, medical care and schooling while the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (2007: 2)) suggests that many children are deprived of social services such as health care, education, nutrition and rights to basic requirements of life. As one of the poorest nations of the world, high level mismanagement, unemployment and poor social services limits access of Nigerians in general and the child in particular, to quality life early childhood education and care.

2.3 Government, culture and religion

Nigeria is a federal republic with three spheres of government; Federal (central), State and Local government. There are equally three arms of government namely executive, legislative and judiciary. The president is the head of a democratically elected government and is eligible for two four-year terms. It has bicameral national assembly. The legislative branch is made up of the houses of representative and the senate. Decisions, legislations on policies and revenue are taken centrally and implemented at state and local government levels.

Politics and politicians in Nigeria influence outcomes of educational policies in general and the quality of early childhood education in particular. This is with respect to policy decisions and political agendas of parties which most times lack the machinery for effective service delivery to the populace. Constant strife, escalating political and religious tensions impact on early childhood programmes particularly in crisis prone areas in Nigeria. The political agenda in Nigeria tends to strengthen inequity at different levels in the society. There is poor governance, unwillingness to fund or invest in educational institutions and programmes, frequent changes, corruption, political crisis and tensions which creates uncertainties and displaces families. Educational projects have been abandoned for different reasons at different times. This view is shared by Akanbi (2012) who

noted that administrative and political changes in Nigeria impacted on the funding of both the early years and primary education.

Nigeria is a multi-cultural society with over 250 ethnic groups. The social structures and cultural beliefs and values of each group, reflect on the approach to provision for children in ECE. Though the official language is English, there are over 50 indigenous languages. The three predominant groups in Nigeria include Igbo's in the south east, who are estimated to be about 18% of the population and are predominantly Christians; Yoruba's in the southwest who occupy about five states is about 21%. This group is thought to be a blend of both Muslims and Christians. The Hausa's who geographically are located within the eight northern states and are estimated to be about 29% of the population, are predominantly Muslims. Religious tensions and ethnic violence is rampant in Nigeria. Outside these groups, there are other prominent but less copious groups.

2.4 Imo State: Geography, economy, and education

Imo state, the focus of this study, is located within the south east zone of Nigeria with Owerri as the state capital. There are 27 local government areas (LGAs) which fall within the three geographical zones in Imo State namely Orlu, Okigwe and Owerri zones. Its population is estimated to be about 3,934,899 (2006 census figure). Imo state has boundaries with Anambra state in the west, Rivers in the south, Abia in the east and Enugu in the North and covers an area of about 5,288 sq. kilometres (National Population Commission., 2006). Its location within the tropical rain forest where it experiences rainfall between April to October and dry season between October to March, as well as the presence of rivers like Otamiri, Oguta and Njaba has played a major role in shaping the lifestyle and economic activities of its people, the majority of whom are farmers.

Imo state is endowed with mineral resources like clay, limestone, salt deposits, petroleum, zinc ore and gravel as well as agricultural products like oil palm, cocoa, groundnut rubber, rice, yam, maize, cassava and raffia palm (Emenolor & Akanwa, 2007). Ajani & Babalola (2009) noted that there is a high level of income inequality with about 44% of the population in low level skills jobs and

agriculture as the main source of income for households. In a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics, about 10% of the population reside in large towns including the state capital. There is rural poverty and the main economic activity in the state is agriculture which employs about 74% of the population. 27% are in self-employed non-agricultural areas such as trading (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Similarly, a survey on women's economic status revealed that about 39.7% are petty traders, about 29.1% engage in farming, food processing 27.4 % and 3.8% in craft (Onyenechere, 2011). There are various educational institutions which are owned and funded by communities, federal and state governments, religious organizations and private individuals which provide programmes ranging from early years education up to higher education. However, private sector dominates in the provision of early childhood education and care for children between birth-5 years.

Map of Imo State

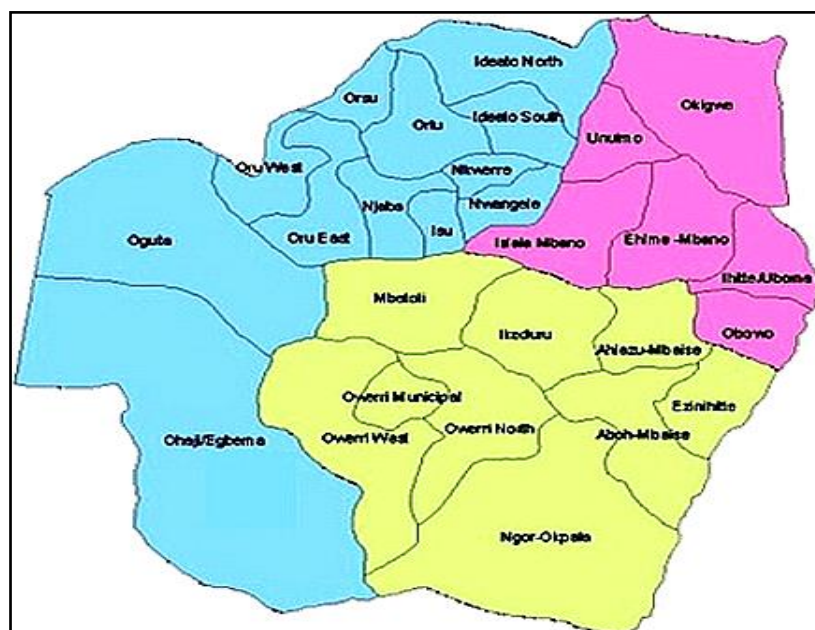


Figure 2.2 Source: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/nigeria>

2.5 Historical overview of early childhood education in Nigeria

Early Childhood Education was informal in the traditional African society, and it focused on the cognitive, physical, moral and social development of children. Parents and siblings were the main teachers and instruction was through word of mouth. Children learnt through observation, role-play

and storytelling (Akinbote & Alhassan, 2011). Their upbringing was the joint responsibility of the nuclear and extended families as well as neighbours who provided exciting interactions that impacts positively on the child's psychological and social development (Igbokwe et al., 2015). This shared responsibility, enabled mothers to work outside the home (Hodges, 2001). Urbanization as well as changing economic and social structure has led to a reversal of this trend by creating two-parent working family as more women go into the labour force in search of paid jobs.

Akinbote & Alhassan, 2011) trace formal early childhood education in Nigeria to the Christian Missionaries who introduced western education in the 19th century. Nursery education first began as Sunday school classes which were organized in church premises by wives of missionaries who came to spread the Christian religion. What began as Sunday school for children, later transformed into formalised all week classes in various cities where the missionaries settled. It is said that wealthy Nigerians and missions later established more schools which served parents who got into paid jobs and had need for centres where their children would be cared for while they were at work. Akinbote & Alhassan also noted that infant schools were common during the colonial era and it was mandatory for children to spend two years in infant schools or preparatory classes before entering primary education. These schools were run by private individuals or groups that charged fees.

The last two decades of the 20th century can be described as the period of rapid expansion in early childhood education in Nigeria. This is attributed to political and socio-economic developments after independence. Rapid industrialization particularly after the civil war, establishment of more tertiary institutions created employment opportunities for both men and women thus increasing the demand for nursery places by foreigners and Nigerians alike (Akinbote & Alhassan, 2011). An improved financial status of families and better education meant improved conditions of living and high demand for nursery education particularly by women who needed places to keep their children while they were at work. Gabriel (2013) noted that there was upsurge in the number of early years settings in Nigeria particularly in the urban centres. Religious organizations, individuals,

communities and NGO's established settings in places like churches, halls and mosques. Supporting the view on the rapid expansion of pre-school places, Maduewesi (2005) is of the view that the changing phase of economic life, whereby women in their large numbers are engaged in a variety of roles and positive changes in the global idea and concern regarding child care led to the demand for more provision for children.

2.6 Objectives of early childhood education in Nigeria

The objectives of early childhood education as stated in the national policy on education as stated in the 2004 National Policy on Education includes:

- i. Providing a smooth transition from the home to the school.
- ii. Preparing the child for the primary level of education
- iii. Providing adequate care and supervision for children while their parents are at work
- iv. Inculcating in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, and the local environment, playing with toys, artistic and musical activities
- v. Teaching the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes forms, etc. through play, and inculcating social norms.

The document lists a number of measures to be taken by government to ensure the achievement of the objectives of pre-primary education and they include encouraging private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education, making provision in Teacher Training institutions for production of specialist teachers in pre-primary education, ensuring that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the local community, ensuring that the main method of teaching in pre-primary institutions will be through play, regulating and controlling the operation of pre-primary education, ensuring adequate training of staff and provision of essential equipment.

This Policy according NERDC is expected to harmonize practice in early years learning in Nigeria and governments' role is to encourage Nigerians to establish nursery settings, provide training

programmes for early years teachers, develop adequate curriculum, supervise the establishment of preschools, ensure quality, provide textbooks, ensure that the medium of instruction is the mother tongue and that the main method of teaching will be through play. From this picture there was no direct government involvement by way of financial support or funding or establishment of a model of early years settings. This had huge implications in terms of cost, quality and access to provisions particularly for rural dwellers and low income families. While the government policy document is explicit on the provision for birth-3 and 3-5 cohorts, in practice provision for under-threes is increasingly non-existent in government settings.

According to Ali-Akpajiak Sofo & Pyke (2003), there was a flaw in this policy in that children between the ages of birth-3 were excluded from early childhood education and care, especially those from poor economic backgrounds. With inequitable access, poor planning and management and inadequate funding in Nigeria (World Bank, 2013b), the poor state of infrastructures in both urban and rural areas (Akinbote & Alhassan, 2011; Ejiogu et al., 2013; Ighalo, 2015), as well as the absence of state funded provision for under threes, high and middle income families resort to privately operated child care providers who are known to charge high fees that effectively exclude poor and low income families many of whom fall back on informal child care (Alabi & Ijaiya, 2014). The use of family members or housemaids is a common feature in Nigeria. Akindele (2011) observed that most children between birth-2 years do not attend crèche because apart from government's failure to provide ECE for children under 3years, most parents consider enrolling children in crèche as waste of funds.

2.7 Types of early childhood provision in Imo State Nigeria

Provisions in early years education in Nigeria are of different variations and stages. In Imo like in other states, there are crèche/daycare, nurseries and kindergarten. Maduewesi (1999) noted that crèches and daycare centres admit children below the age of three. Nursery settings admit those between two-four years and the kindergarten is for children between five to six years. Early years

settings are located in both urban and rural areas and serve different age groups. While most settings accept children between three months to five years, some others only accept those between three to five years old. Opening hours varies between the hours of 8 A.M. – 1 P.M. and 7 A.M. – 6 P.M. In different facilities, quality and cost of care are varied and determined by care providers and influenced by geographical location of setting and quality of staff employed. Some of the centres are run from make shift facilities while others serve as an annex to a primary school complex. The quality and cost of childcare is not the same for all, especially those in rural areas and from low income families in the cities. While parents pay high fees in private settings, education and care in government funded settings is free. Choice of setting is highly dependent on affordability.

A UNICEF (1996) report stated that ECE facilities are controlled mainly by NGOs, church organizations and communities. Also private day-care centres and nursery schools sprang up as part of community participation in ECCDE. Hodges (2001) observed two types of provisions in Nigeria. For instance, well-resourced settings with high standards and high costs that make them only accessible to children from the middle and upper classes, and the poorly resourced settings found in disadvantaged areas of cities. He noted that most of the poorly resourced settings operated from improvised buildings, were overcrowded and lacked both qualified staff and learning materials. This view is consistent with Ejieh (2006: 60) who stated that nursery schools in Nigeria are located in places like residential buildings, campuses or institutions of higher learning, business and church premises. Nevertheless, some are set up mainly as full-fledged nursery and primary schools with their own premises. He noted that physical structures vary widely in terms of quality and aesthetics from one establishment to another, as do the facilities and equipment. Similarly, Osakue (2011: 208) noted that children are often tightly gathered in classrooms with little or no space to move freely nor any chance for social interaction with others, nor for the teacher to give individual attention to each child. He went further to say that the physical/learning environment of many early years settings is poorly designed, without ample space, furniture, toys, wholesome pictures and other materials which a child needs for stimulation, exploration, and simulation.

In Nigeria as in many other countries of the world, there is increased demand for care and education particularly in urban areas which has higher concentration of settings than the rural and sub-urban areas and this could be attributed to the high level of urban migration and increased changing family roles globally. Swiniarski (2007) attributes the increased demand for education and care for children in most countries to the impact of globalization, the social and economic changes which places mothers in the labour force, single parent families and two working parent families. Despite government involvement and policy requesting all public schools to establish early years settings, provision for birth-five year olds remains private sector driven and providers include private individuals, religious organizations, community and the government.

2.7.1 Community settings

Various institutions and Organizations establish both early years settings and primary schools in their work places to cater for children of families that are employed in such organizations. Enrolment is often open to people outside the community. Members of staff of such institutions pay lower fees while non-staff members pay higher. In Nigeria this is very popular with institutions of higher education, military establishments and multi-national corporations. The teachers in such schools or settings are employed independently by the organizations, and are not qualified and are sometimes paid lower wages than their counterparts in government settings (Obiweluzor, 2015). Some of these settings operate crèches for children below two years while some only accept children between 2-5 years. There are settings owned and manned by religious groups for instance Islamic and Christian organizations. These settings charge fees and are sometimes located in churches and mosques or adjoining buildings.

2.7.2 Government early years settings

In line with the 2007 National Policy on Education, all public or government funded schools are meant to establish early years centres for 3-5 year olds (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007). Teachers are employed by the government, and the learning materials

and resources are meant to be supplied by the government. Early years education in government schools is meant to be non-fee paying though there are claims that parents pay some hidden fees, most settings are poorly equipped and settings in many cities do not meet stipulated government standards.

2.7.3 Private owned settings

The official recognition of private sector involvement in the provision of ECE and the increasing demand for education and care of young children by working class families led to the proliferation of childcare centres. Private ECE settings in Nigeria are profit oriented, poorly regulated and are run based on high fees paid by parents. Urwick (2002) noted the lack of subsidy for private early years settings as well as the lack of limits on fees charged by settings. He went further to say that 'this "hands off" policy towards the private sector was a matter of political and administrative convenience, rather than reflecting any strongly-held belief in pluralism or in a limited role for the state (p.134).

The expansion of private for profit and unregulated providers in ECE in Nigeria means affordability, accessibility and quality remains a huge challenge particularly for children in poor and low income families in both rural and urban areas. While some of the settings are of high standard with qualified staff, some others lack the most basic facilities for quality teaching and learning and most of the teachers do not have any form of training in education or early childhood development (Ejeh, 2006; Hodges, 2001; Obisanya, 2001). This is in line with Sooter (2013) who highlighted some of the challenges resulting from the proliferation of ECE settings in Nigeria. He noted that weak regulation of settings has resulted in poor standards and poor quality provision for many children. His argument is that the quality of ECE offered by such settings will not guarantee equal opportunity, self-sufficient society and future leaders of the country.

2.7.4 Recent developments in early childhood education in Nigeria

A number of intervention strategies and policies have been initiated in ECE in Nigeria. These innovations are geared toward improving provisions and effective service delivery that would improve the life chances of children and give them a good head start. This can be described as a shift from government's non-participation in the provision of education and care for children in Nigeria. This vision of a 'good head start' for all children shares the ideology and concept of the Every Child Matters agenda in the UK and the Head Start programme in the US. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (2007) noted that intervention in early years learning and development in Nigeria is firmly rooted in the national philosophy of education which is premised on the development of the individual into effective citizens and the need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children irrespective of background or circumstances.

Prior to 2007, the national policy on ECE and the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) catered for children between 3-5 years old. The Child Rights Act (2003) which was signed into law in 2006 recognizes the status and rights of every Nigerian child irrespective of disability and provides measures to restore confidence, self-esteem and protection against abuse. The implementation of the Child Rights Act (2003) and the UBE Act (2004) are not without criticisms. Like the National Policy on Education (1998), the UBE Act (2004) was silent on provisions for children from birth-three years old thereby denying millions of children their right to care, particularly those from low income backgrounds. The Child Rights Act had little effect particularly in some northern states where it was not endorsed. Evidence suggests that only few states in Nigeria have implemented this act as a result of claims that some sections are in conflict with some cultural and religious values as well as its 'over indulgence' of the child. Other reforms include a national policy on gender in basic education (2007), guidelines for the identification of gifted children (2006), and an implementation plan for special needs education strategy (2007).

The Universal Basic Education Act (2004) integrates pre-school education in Nigeria into the UBE programme thereby increasing governmental participation and ownership in early childhood education. Under this Act, all public primary schools are to have pre-primary school linkages to cater for the 3-5 year old children. It is meant to be free or non-fee paying and an integral part of the UBE programme. As part of the government's funding of early childhood education, 5% of the federal government's UBE intervention fund to states is to be allocated to pre-primary care for children between the ages of 3-5years (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009a). Part of the 1997 to 2001 federal government of Nigeria/UNICEF Basic Education cooperation was designed to increase access to affordable ECE for children and families, the development of ECE centres, support parents and communities in the education of children, particularly at crucial stages of their learning and development. The agreement also focused on employment creation and empowerment of women to enable them function effectively in their child rearing roles (Adebisi et al., 2014; UNICEF-Lagos, Nigeria & Nigeria Federal Government, 2001).

The National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (2007) is another effort aimed at the holistic development of the child. In the light of the state of children in Nigeria, the government has moved towards a better approach to early childhood education and care. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (2007) suggests that Nigeria has transformed from a single sectoral approach to multi-sectoral one bringing together intervention from other sectors like health, nutrition, water, environmental sanitation, stimulation, protection and psycho-social care for children in the birth-five age group. It brings previous existing policies into a coherent one and emphasizes interventions for the child.

This new approach to care is expected to bridge the gap in the first two policies that left out the birth-three age group. It is a framework that sets the standard for learning and development, and tackles the issue of poverty, health, and care for children through providing for equal opportunities and creating room for partnership with parents, caregivers, key public and private agencies, sectors

like health, water resources, women's affairs, agriculture religious organizations, and community leaders, ensuring quality as well as uniform practice and care delivery. Other forms of provision for children include the establishment of child care units in 111 primary schools in each 36 states of the federation and the federal capital territory, monitoring and evaluation of 27,500 day care centres, organizing of training workshops and programmes for caregivers and early years practitioners, the development of National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005), the National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007) as well as an early child care and development caregivers and teachers manual (Makoju et al., 2005).

In addition to these reforms, the federal government in partnership with international organizations like UNICEF and the Bernhard van Leer Foundations (BvLF's) have made significant contributions aimed at reaching families in rural areas who previously had no access to provision. Maduewesi, (2005) asserts that building on the 1986 Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) agreement and in partnership with Bernard Van Leer Foundation of the Netherlands, five Pilot Early Child Care (ECC) centres were established in five primary health care Local Government Areas (LGAs) in places like Oyo in Oyo State, Owo in Ondo State, Ogun in Osun State, Yamaltu-Deba in Bauchi State and Calabar Municipality in Cross River State. He noted that the first phase was from 1987 to 1990, with the active involvement of the Ministry of Health. The second phase which commenced between 1991 and 1995 established 10 centres in 10 States. A total of 1,272 ECC facilities which had an enrolment figure of 145,469 children were in existence by 1995. By 1999 the facilities increased to 7,379 with an increased enrolment of 400,000 children (Ibid, 2005).

According to Gabriel (2013), these ECE facilities were later transformed into Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) programmes of the NERDC and created access for low

socio-economic and disadvantaged children especially those based in the rural areas where they had no form of pre-schools such as day care, play group, nursery or kindergarten schools. He went on to describe the project as community based, low-cost, affordable, and creating early stimulation of the child and improving mothers' child rearing skills through awareness for the use of local resources for children's learning. Supporting this view Akinbote & Alhassan (2011) said that apart from providing a better approach and ensuring a cheaper alternative in childcare and development, the project curtailed the establishment of poor resourced and high and badly managed early years settings in Nigeria.

2.7.5 Time line in historical developments in early childhood education in Nigeria

Below is a linear representation of significant developments and policies in early childhood education and care in Nigeria. It covers the periods between 1977 and 2014.

1977 National Policy on Education (NPE). Inclusion of Early Childhood Education in the National Policy on Education.

1990 Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education to look after the education of nomads and other migrant groups.

1991 Establishment of the National Child Welfare committee in the then Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare (Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development) to formulate a national framework for implementing the goals of the World Summit for Children (WSC).

Ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Established the Early Childhood Care Development and Education now called Early Childhood Care Project.

1994 Inauguration of the National Child Rights Implementation Committee (NCRIC) meant to popularize the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child and the Organization of African Union (OAU) Charter on Child Rights and Welfare.

- 1999 Universal Basic Education was launched in September.

- 2000 Endorsed the Dakar World Education Forum (among other things, expanding and improving comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children).

- 2002 Inauguration of the National Early Years Development and Consultative Committee (EYDCC).

- 2003 Child Rights Act signed into law.

- 2004 Universal Basic Education Act (Integration of Pre-school Education into UBE as an essential component resulting in the increase of government ownership and participation in pre-school education).

- 2005 National Minimum Standards for Early Childhood Care Centres (to streamline the various categories of facilities and operation in Early Childhood Care and Education).

- 2006 National Caregivers Manual for birth-five (stipulating the roles and skills required for caring for children from birth-five.

- Guidelines for Identification of Gifted Children

- 2007 Implementation of National Integrated Early Childhood Education Curriculum for children from birth-five in Nigeria.

- National Policy on Gender in Basic Education.

- Implementation Plan for Special Needs Education Strategy.

- 2014 One-Year Pre-Primary School Education Curriculum (Designed for Kindergarten Education).

2.7.6 Equity and access to provisions for children (birth-five years) in Nigeria

With the launching of UBE, Nigeria made explicit, its commitment to two ideals, firstly, that all Nigerian children have a right to be educated. Secondly, that education is the means through which

Nigeria can reduce the incidence of poverty being experienced by the vast majority of people and education would serve as a tool for creating an efficient and competitive economy (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013, Federal Ministry of Education, 2009b). The 2013 NPE emphasised that Basic Education is a right and by law compulsory for all children who are of school age. This is irrespective of gender, ethnicity, religion, location or other distinguishing factors (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013). However, despite government participation and changing policies aimed at improving access to high quality learning, a good number of children still remain excluded from early childhood education in both rural and urban areas. For example, the (UNESCO, 2012b) Global Monitoring Report on Education for All ranked Nigeria as first among countries with the highest number of out of school children (one out of every five Nigerian children are out of school). Apart from having a very high percentage of out of school children (about 160 million which represents between 30-40% of out of school children worldwide), the Nigerian education system is generally characterized by inequitable access, poor planning and management, poor funding, unqualified teachers, and poor staff-student ratio (World Bank, 2013b).

There is growing awareness and increased enrolment in Early Childhood Education in a number of states, however, enrolment is low in some others with high gender gap in most northern states (Makoju et al., 2005). The Ministry has acknowledged that disparities exist across the country in terms of quality. There are differences in physical and economic access as a result of cultural differences and a high level of private sector participation. There are also differences between rural and urban settings and the economic status of families. It equally revealed disparities between the expected and actual enrolment for children in early years education. For example, out of 22 million eligible children, only 2.02 million actually enrolled. This leaves about 19.98 million out of school. Similarly, out of the 3-5 million school-aged nomadic migrant children, only 450,000 are enrolled leaving about 3.1 million out of school (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009a). This depressing disclosure is a contradiction of government's promise of high quality and equitable access for all.

I contend that poor access, inequity and poor quality of provision and services in early years learning and other levels of education in Nigeria is in part structural. Indeed, a link exists between equity and quality in ECE and the level of poverty prevalent in the society. Questions of equity and quality of provision in ECE in Nigeria have to be addressed as part of a much broader political, socio-cultural and socio-economic policy framework in the country. Nigeria is described as one of the most unequal countries in the world (British Council Nigeria & UKaid, 2012) with uneven distribution of wealth and power which widens the gap between the rich and the poor (Makoju et al., 2005). Like many other countries in SSA, Nigeria has high rate of unemployment and illiteracy, low life expectancy, high infant mortality, and poor rural economy. There is evidence that majority of its population live in absolute or endemic poverty which goes beyond income poverty. It impacts hugely on infrastructures and social services including ECE and basic needs such as education, shelter, food, safe drinking water, roads, electricity, health, and sanitation (Ali-Akpajiak Sofo & Pyke, 2003; Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007).

The organization and functioning of early learning effectively excludes children from poor or low income families, rural dwellers as well as disadvantaged children such as migrant fishermen and nomadic pastorals whose lifestyle and occupation requires them to be constantly on the move and excluded from formal early years education and care. While there may be freedom of choice for parents, choice is a function of the cost of provision and/or affordability, particularly in a poorly regulated childcare market. Settings with high standards and qualified teachers charge fees affordable only by the elites. The dominance of pre-school education provided by some unregistered, unregulated private providers and profit oriented organizations with no subsidies from the government means providers determine both the curriculum and cost of education.

In all private settings, fees are charged arbitrarily by providers and at rates deemed appropriate for services rendered. This is an example of what Penn & Lloyd (2012) describe as a 'raw' childcare market that occurs when there is minimal government regulation, a situation common in low-

income countries. They argue that ‘raw childcare markets exacerbate inequality’ (2012: 173). The 2001 National Planning Commission and the UNICEF Nigeria Report quoted a joint FGN/UNICEF/UNESCO, E-1993 Situation and Policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria as indicating that about 80% of early years education settings in Nigeria are owned and completely controlled by private for profit providers such as religious organizations or private businesses. It noted that these providers often charge fees that exclude many children from early years education. A major feature of such settings which exist in poor rural and deprived urban areas, is sub-standard facilities and services it offers (National Planning Commission and UNICEF, 2001)

Participation in early years education and quality of provision is dependent on demand, affordability and the geographical location of settings. Cost, a very important factor for equity in early years education, is varied. Though centres in deprived areas charge fees that are sometimes affordable by low income families, the learning environment, equipment, infrastructure and teaching staff are often of poor quality when compared with some well-equipped centres. Makoju et al., (2005) states that about 72% of resource items such as playground, papers, crayons, flash cards, charts, games, letters and some other resources are not available in some pre-schools. Makoju equally noted that settings did not have a uniform curriculum, and that safe drinking water is in short supply and in some cases not available at all, for example, sources of water for some settings are well water 17%, or rain water 5.3%, and 9.7% had no source of water at all. Toilet facilities are of poor quality, for example 51.8% are pit toilets, while water systems are found in 33.5%.

About 35.7% of pre-schools are located in rural areas in Nigeria while 64.3% are in urban areas (Agusiobo, 1999, cited in Makoju et al., 2005). This high concentration of settings in urban areas means that participation rate in early years education in urban areas is likely higher than those in the semi-urban and rural areas. Rural dwellers account for a majority of the poorest population which lack very basic facilities like water, electricity, good roads, and health services (Ali-Akpajiak Sofo & Pyke, 2003). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) suggests that about 70% of the Nigerian

population live in rural areas while 30% live in urban areas (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). This estimate presupposes that a large number of children in both rural and urban areas do not only lack access to quality education, they also lack basic requirements of life.

Summary

This chapter discussed the contextual issues shaping early childhood education in Nigeria such as the demographic, political, historical, economic, cultural and religious context of Nigeria and Imo State. It also presented the historical development of early childhood education in Nigeria, the types of provision, the objectives of early childhood education, the disparities and inconsistencies in provisions and recent developments for families and children between birth-five years. The next chapter will focus on global perspectives in early childhood education.

Chapter Three

Global Perspectives on Early Childhood Education

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review that frames the research topic. It addresses global perspectives on early childhood education by drawing on various discourses on intervention in children's programmes and services and the value of high quality early years education and care on children's achievements and development. International initiatives and influences on ECE such as UNCRC, EFA and the MDG goals are also discussed. The roles and criticisms of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO's) in transnational policy transfers particularly within the context of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is highlighted. The first section in this chapter examines the definition of ECE, approaches to provision for children and global perspectives on ECE. This is followed by evidence from the global North which has influenced provision for children globally. This is closely followed by the roles of INGOs in policy transfers.

3.1 Defining early childhood education and care

The terms early childhood education care (ECEC), Early Childhood Education (ECE) and pre-school education are used interchangeably in this thesis to denote the education and care provided for children before the formal or compulsory age of starting school. Some policy documents and research literature also use the terms ECD (Early Childhood Development) and others use ECC (Early Childhood Care) and subtly different, but related concepts. Indeed, the age of children in early childhood education or care differs across countries. For instance, children start school at the age of six in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and France; seven in Ethiopia, and five in England and Australia. This formative period is considered an important stage in child development because of the role it plays in preparing children for lifelong learning and in the development of physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional skills (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Investment and provision for children in ECE is considered an investment with returns in both human and

financial terms hence countries are focused on investing on children particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The International Labour Organization (2012) recognizes ECE as a means of narrowing the “opportunity divide” particularly for vulnerable groups, by improving school readiness, enrolment and better achievement, as well as reducing drop outs, creating economic and productivity returns and promoting fairness, and social justice.

Ang defines ECE as a place of learning for children, a foundation laying stage where children are prepared for their future roles and responsibilities as productive citizens (Ang, 2012). This view is supported by Siraj-Blatchford (2009) who suggests that many of the most essential values of a future society are formed in early childhood in present contexts. Most argue that ECE helps societies to construct and reconstruct community and economy (Woodhead, 1996); and propagates its tradition from one generation to another and promotes innovation and transformation through educating and caring for its young (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Woodhead, 1996). As the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) and (Ejeh, 2006; Maduewesi, 2005) have pointed out, early years education and care involves all intellectual, social, and physical development as well as the education of children below the compulsory age of starting school and is often designed to prepare them for primary education. To Gabriel (2013) early years education includes any formal or non-formal education provided for children from birth to primary school-going age in which the curriculum enables them to acquire social skills and develop both physically and intellectually, as a foundation for life and transition into primary school.

Although Penn (2009) is in support of the view that ECE can enhance children’s subsequent school performance and development, she however warns that early years learning is beneficial to children only if it is of high quality. Her argument is that poor quality ECE may do more harm than good, especially to children from poorer backgrounds. This view calls for urgent review and questioning of the not just the availability, but also the quality of provision available to most children

particularly in the Majority World countries known due to scarce resources and high percentages of out of school children. For instance, UNESCO (2014) report stated that:

Worldwide, 250 million children – many of them from disadvantaged backgrounds – are not learning even basic literacy and numeracy skills, let alone the further skills they need to get decent work and lead fulfilling lives' and in spite of the gains made, 'far too many children lack early childhood care and education. In 2012, 25% of children under 5 suffered from stunting. In 2011, around half of young children had access to pre-primary education, and in sub-Saharan Africa the share was only 18%. (p.5)

Britto et al., 2011) warn that without adequate attention to the issue of quality in programmes, societies may not close the gap in outcomes between children from disadvantaged or low-income families and those from rich socio-economic background.

3.2 Emphasis and approaches in the provision for children

Countries including Nigeria have committed to effective delivery of early years learning and have developed frameworks and structures in response to global demand for change. Early Childhood Education (ECE) employs diverse terminologies with varying emphasis, funding patterns, scope, and approaches globally. The emphasis of the programmes and curricular components is dependent on the conceptualization or vision and the priorities of countries or organizations providing or funding the programmes. For instance UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) refer to the term Early Childhood Development (ECD). This terminology emphasises the holistic and integrated development of the child and it encompasses programmes in nutrition, health and psychosocial development of children. UNESCO refers to it as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). This term combines education and care for children. The OECD and EU employ Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), which incorporates education and care for children, with education mentioned first (Education International, 2010; International Labour Organization, 2012; Kamerman, 2006).

Nigeria, which is the focus of this study, adopts the term ECD. According to the 2007 Integrated National Policy on Early Childhood Development, the administration of this level of education is

under the Ministry of Education. This policy framework emphasizes a holistic and integrated approach to child development which seeks to address critical aspects of early childhood care so as to yield the highest dividends and sustainable gains for children, families, communities and nations of the world (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005). It promotes programmes in health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, psychological care and early learning, child protection and rights. This provision is offered in educational institutions such as crèches, nurseries and kindergartens, prior to their entering the primary school (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). From this definition the age range for early childhood education in Nigeria covers the period between birth-five years, and the focus is on the academic or educational aspect, rather than the notion of care and education.

Conceptualizations of ECE differ across countries for instance, (Kamerman, 2006) observed the clear divide between ‘preschool education’ and ‘childcare’ services in many countries such that the provision for children below 3 years is considered the responsibility of parents while in some other countries, it is integrated with well-defined frameworks and universal entitlements like other basic education programmes. Smith (1996b, cited in International Labour Organization, 2012) refutes the notion that education and care are two distinct aspects of early years education hence he argues that differentiating between education and care is impossible because both are entrenched in early childhood education hence it is equally referred to as “educare”. Myers (2000) who shares a similar view asserts that that irrespective of the terms employed, learning and education are embedded in care and development. This implies that ultimately, education systems are systems of care which should be focused on promoting the integral development of children in the system, not just towards preparing children for school. Similarly, Caldwell (1989, cited in Smith et al., 2000: 11) upholds the view that ‘Educate and care for - the seemingly distinct, non-overlapping way we use these verbs appear to magnify a false dichotomy. The reality of any early childhood program is that it must provide a proper blend of education and care – educare’.

In spite of global commitments and coherent policies and achievements in providing access to early years learning in many countries, it is clear that approaches to early childhood education and care differ considerably within and across countries (Neuman, 2005). Provision for children is considered a legal entitlement in some countries. For example, national legislation has created free access to early childhood education for children between two and half to three years in countries such as France, Belgium, Italy and Netherland whereas in places such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden ECE is observed as a legal right and parents are meant to pay a low income-based fee. There is split in the organisation of children's services with childcare for children below the age of three and education for those above three under different auspices in some countries. Some scholars argue that this arrangement is more as a result of differences in the conceptualization of ECE. For instance, provision for children below the age of three is considered to be the responsibility of families and this service is provided by private for profit entrepreneurs in many countries.

Demand for ECE is on the rise (Dembélé & Oviawe, 2007) and gross enrolments are said to have increased globally from about 44 million in 1970 to about 139 million in 2006 with notable progress in the provision for children between 3-6 years (UNESCO, 2010c). Analysts are sceptical about focusing on gross enrolment which they say can be misleading because it paints a false picture of enrolment and tends to conceal the low priority accorded to the provision for children under three years. Myers (2002, cited in Arnold, 2004: 2) describes the increase in enrolment as 'small and marginal [representing] a kind of inertia and a failure to give priority to ECCD in often difficult economic conditions'. He noted that coverage remains low and distribution skewed in many countries. Quality is often poor, attention to the learning and development of children under 3 is weak, and there are many programme challenges to be met (Myers, 1993) In line with this argument, Grantham-McGregor et al., (2007) noted that about 219 million disadvantaged children below the age of five in developing countries are not reaching their development potentials due to adverse environments and experiences for example poverty, poor health and nutrition, as well as

lack of stimulation create lifelong developmental barriers that have devastating effects on a person's learning, productivity and earning potential.

Penn & Lloyd (2012) description of 'raw' childcare markets in low-income countries is evident in IECD in Nigeria which is private sector driven. Provision for children between birth-five years is dominated by for-profit private providers, faith-based and community settings, as well as NGOs with minimal government regulation and control. Most settings are of poor quality with an unqualified work force, poor environment and resources (Ejeh, 2006; Gabriel, 2013; Ige, 2011b). Under the Integrated National Policy on Early Childhood Development, which was introduced in 2007, free places exist for children between 3 to 5 years in government funded settings only. Although this provision created access for some low income groups, the impact is minimal, and existing literature suggests that provision is of poor quality (Coates & Faulkner, 2013; Sooter, 2013). Provision for the birth-three cohort is predominantly under private sector control, organized in day-care centres, nurseries and crèches which are of poor standard and are solely funded by parents. This restricts access to provision for children particularly those from low income groups.

In SSA access to provision for children is varied with imbalance between the high and low income groups. For instance, UNESCO (2010b) report on Africa suggests that children aged 3 and below in many SSA countries are the most disadvantaged with only about 19 out of 46 countries offering official programmes for children aged 2 and below. Nevertheless, there are programmes for children in the 3-5 years age cohort. Dembélé & Oviawe (2007) are of the view that the picture in the SSA region is very gloomy with children leaving primary school without mastering basic academic skills. They attribute it to poor classrooms, lack of learning resources, economic circumstances and hardship and lack of qualified teachers. This raises concern about accessibility and equity in the provision for children in ECE in SSA as well as the disturbing issues of the quality of learning being offered. It raises concerns about the protection of children's rights under the UNCRC.

Highlighting the state of early childhood development, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2005: 1) stated that despite the global acceptance of ECE, it has had low priority in government policies. ECE initiatives are limited and unevenly distributed, and there are wide differences in quality of the initiatives. Most ECE programmes are developed and maintained by private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. They suffer from inadequate funding and a lack of coherence, coordination, sustainability and long-term policies. This is particularly true in Africa, where scarce resources, especially for education, suggest that investment in ECE could endanger the commitment to other education sectors. While countries such as Seychelles and Mauritius are believed to provide access to early years education for all children, some other countries are yet to establish effective governance, including regulation and quality monitoring in private, faith-based and community facilities.

3.3 Global perspectives and interventions in early childhood education

The importance of early childhood education is acknowledged globally. This is evident in existing literature following decades of research in both Europe and North America, which has created awareness with regard to the importance of high quality early years education and care on the learning and future development of all children. Different lines of arguments and rationales for investing in high quality early childhood programmes and services for children have also emerged. The rationale varies across research studies, funding organizations, and countries, and is dependent on the goals or objectives of interest groups. For instance, Urban noted that ‘the reason, for moving early childhood issues up political agendas into the public sphere and, even onto electoral agendas are as diverse and contradictory as the many possible ways of understanding children and childhoods’ (2010: 1). In the analysis of international evidence on the social benefits of ECE, Penn came to the conclusion that ‘there are many competing, intersecting and overlapping arguments and perspectives that drive development of ECEC policy; not all of them are compatible’ (2009: 5).

The interest and rapid expansion at the international and national levels is driven by the understanding that children's future achievements are dependent on participation in education and care of high quality (Gormley et al., 2005; Shonkoff & Richmond, 2009) and that there are long term benefits of early intervention for children and families particularly those who live in poverty (Nores & Barnett, 2010b; Nores et al., 2005; UNESCO, 2000). According to the International Labour Organization 2012) ECE is an important means of narrowing the "opportunity divide" particularly for vulnerable groups, by improving school readiness, enrolment and better achievement, as well as reducing drop outs, creating economic and productivity returns and promoting fairness and social justice. This awareness has increased the demand for preschool education with different interest groups advocating governmental intervention and investment in publicly funded high quality programmes and services for children. Other reasons for increased attention as stated in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2006a, OECD, 2006b) include the need to increase women's labour market participation, to reconcile work and family responsibilities, and to address demographic changes particularly falling fertility rates and the general ageing of populations and issues of child poverty and educational disadvantage.

Various arguments justifying the call for public investment in high quality ECE outlined by Myers¹(1993) include: the human rights argument, which focuses on a child's right to live and develop their full potential; the moral and social values argument, which presents children as agents through whom humanity can preserve and transmit desirable moral and social values beginning from an early stage in life; and an economic argument that focuses on the economic benefits that accrue to society as a result of investing in child development. Myers (1993) also notes that there is a programme efficacy argument that suggests that ECE can be improved through combining programmes such as health, education and nutrition with programmes of child development, and a social equity argument which holds the view that providing a 'fair start' for all children can minimise inequalities. Further, there is a scientific argument which presents research evidence on

long term benefits of early intervention in early years on the development of intelligence, personality, and social behaviour as well as changing social and demographic circumstances such as migration, and changing family structures which places more women in the labour market and creates the need for children's services.

Underpinning the human capital strand of argument is the implicit belief that children are human capital in the making. Proponents of this line of thought argue that investment in ECE reduces the expense of remedial action in later life, improves productivity and less disruptive life in adulthood (see Penn, 2009). A perspective in this line of argument is that offered by studies which have investigated the long term socio-economic benefits of participation in ECE particularly for children living in poverty (Johnson & Kossykh, 2008; OECD, 2006b). These studies concluded that participation in high quality programmes improves academic and social performances in childhood and even much later in adulthood. Similarly, other studies such as Lynch (2004) and Heckman (2006) focused on the economic returns on investment in services and programmes for children while others (Barnett, 2008; Engle et al., 2011) investigated the importance of environmental influences on cognitive and social development, the economic and the human costs of poor developmental background and the benefits of early intervention. Heckman and other proponents of the human capital theory argue that investment in early childhood education yields returns. Heckman has pointed to the Abecedarian Early Childhood and the Perry High Scope and Prenatal/Early Infancy projects longitudinal studies which focused on the long and short term benefits of early intervention for children from low income groups and which followed pre-schoolers for decades from childhood until adulthood as evidence of ECE as investment in human capital.

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project conducted in Ypsilanti, Michigan was based on a sample of 123 low-income African-American children considered to be at high risk of school failure (Schweinhart et al., 2005). There were 2 groups studied, both randomly selected. One was an

intervention group that had high quality two-year preschool programmes for 2- and 3-year-olds while the control group had no preschool programmes. Both groups were followed for 40 years and findings are suggestive of the fact that a high-quality early childhood experience has positive effects on the lives of children particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The studies reported that children who attend preschool have the likelihood of graduating from high school, getting employed and earning higher wages, are less likely to be on welfare packages and less likely to be involved in crimes (Epstein et al., 2004; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1997). Similarly, the Carolina Abecedarian study took up the question of the benefits of early childhood education. Participants were 111 African-American children from poor backgrounds, 57 were assigned to high quality intervention pre-school programmes, the remaining 54 children acted as a control group. Findings suggest that children who had access to quality preschool education were likely to be consistently employed and therefore less likely to need public assistance, performed better in cognitive and language or literacy tests and school achievement tests, and were less involved in crimes than those children who had not attended preschool group.

According to others (McKey et al., 1985; Sylva et al., 2004; World Bank, 2011c) participation in high quality early childhood education, impacts positively on the cognitive, social and emotional development of children and lays the foundation for future attainments and educational outcomes. In separate studies conducted outside the USA, Nores & Barnett (2010) investigated the benefits of early childhood interventions across 23 countries and they concluded that while investments in early childhood programmes that focus mainly on nutrition, health and cash transfers to families can be beneficial, investments that offer ECCE to children are more effective with respect to cognitive and schooling outcomes for children.

A longitudinal study in the US involving about 733 children aged between four to eight years, examined the long term effects of quality pre-school experience in community child care centres on both the cognitive and social development of children (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001). Findings of

this study suggest that child care quality has a modest long-term effect on children's patterns of cognitive and social and emotional development of children through kindergarten, and in some cases through the second grade. In a longitudinal, cross-national study of early years settings in 10 countries, Montie and colleagues explored the impact of process and structural dimensions of quality in the settings children attended. While some findings varied across some countries, it was consistent in others. The findings showed that at age seven, language improved depending on the types of activities and the level of choice the child had, the types of equipment, and the availability of materials (Montie et al., 2006).

From a cultural perspective, Nsamenang explored the role of cultures in ECE. He examined the ECE visualized and promoted in the first Education For All goal and other Anglo-American initiatives and programmes that are imported from the global North to the South. He came to the conclusion that EFA goal one and other similar programmes stifle goal-achievement by non-westerners (Nsamenang, 2006:1). In another development, Penn (2011) analysed globalization and inequalities in ECE based on evidence from some case studies. Penn reviewed the activities of INGOs and charities and donor agencies that import ECE policies and promote interventions for children in the global South based studies conducted primarily in the North. The study found competing interests among international donors and key players, with an emphasis that is more on investment and less on the important issues of quality and equity in provision (Penn, 2011). (Burchinal et al., 2000) analysed the relationship between the quality of centre-based child care and infants' cognitive and language development in 89 African-American children of 6 to 36 months old by observing the process and structural measures of quality. Findings revealed that higher quality child care impacts positively on cognitive, language and communication skills of children. In Northern Ireland, for example, Walsh & Gardner (2005) evaluated early childhood learning environments. This study examined quality from the perspective of children by employing what they referred to as an "in-house" instrument. They came to the conclusion that the quality of an early years setting is principally determined by the way the learning and developmental needs of the

main stakeholders (the children) are met. They advocate for a contextual approach rather than a prescriptive standard.

While these studies are indicative of global attention in the field of ECE and have continued to form the basis for policy shifts globally, it is important to question how applicable these findings are, beyond the immediate geographical communities where they are developed. Many argue that the studies were conducted in countries with particular cultural, social, economic and political contexts which makes global applications problematic as a result of differences in the conceptualization of ECE and delivery of children's programmes (Myers, 2006; Nsamenang, 2006; Smith et al., 2000; Woodhead, 1996).

A different rationale for early education is put forward by those who draw on neuroscience (for example, Centre for Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007; McCain & Mustard, 1999; Shonkoff & Richmond, 2009). This rationale is based on the premise the first years of life are a 'critical period' during which brain development is extremely rapid, particularly for the formation of synaptic connections in the brain. It is argued that early stimulation and experiences at this stage has effect on future or later achievements in life. It is thought that early experiences have far reaching effects and determine whether a child's developing brain architecture provides a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behaviour, and health. Different experiences affect the architecture (i.e., wiring) of the brain, the expression of genes, and the biochemistry and physiology of the human body, all of which mediate our cognitive, emotional, and social behaviours. The developmental influences are particularly powerful during sensitive periods of brain maturation that is, during the very early years.

As revealing as that might be, some have suggested that the neurobiological claims should be interpreted with caution (Bailey Jr., 2002; Bruer, 1999; MacNaughton, 2004). Bailey for instance, argues that 'invoking critical periods in support of specific early childhood initiatives is not warranted, nor do behavioural or biological scientists generally support it. Describing the claim as

brain fiction and 'myth of the first three years' (2006: 36). Bruer (1999) strongly argues that despite popular opinion, existing research does not support or back the neuroscientific claims. Bruer contends that while there is evidence of the effect of enriched environment on the development of the brain, neuroscience does not mention which environment is more or less enriched than others. He also contends that even if there are sensitive or critical periods early in life, there is evidence and every possibility of people acquiring cultural and social skills (such as reading or music) at any age. This view has led to the questioning of the claim of 'critical window of opportunity' between ages 3 and 6 or 8 and 10. He suggests that although neural connections form in the early years of life, one cannot say for certain if neural branching offsets neural pruning. (MacNaughton, 2004) noted that though the ideas have gained considerable currency and authority, being promulgated by key international institutions such as the World Bank and other INGOs, they clearly lack evidence or proof.

Apart from studies conducted in the global North, evidence of the benefits of children's participation in ECE programmes has also emerged from studies conducted in developing countries. For instance, the Turkish Early Enrichment Project carried out between 1983 and 1985 with 4-6 year old children and the follow up assessments of the long term outcomes by Kagitcibasi et al., (2001) focused on the separate and combined effects of a centre-based education and a home-based educational intervention for children at preschool ages. Findings were positive for long term effects of intervention programmes, particularly with regard to literacy and cognitive skills. In south India, Rao (2010) analysed the influence of preschool quality on the development of 4 year old children from poor rural families. Higher preschool quality was associated with better developmental outcomes for children.

In the evaluation of the Madrassa preschool program in Kenya, East Africa, (Mwaura et al., 2008) concluded that children who attended the Madrassa resource centres described as high quality settings performed better in language and cognitive skills than those who had no preschool

experience or those who attended community preschool. In the evaluation of a preschool program in rural Bangladesh, Aboud (2006) found that cognitive and school readiness outcomes were correlated with quality scores, but quality was low. In Botswana, Taiwo & Tyolo (2002) studied the effect of preschool education on academic performance in primary school and discovered that children with preschool experience performed better than their peers without preschool experience on English language, mathematics and science during the first few weeks in Grade 1. Taken together these studies are suggestive of global attention to ECE and indicative of the benefits of ECE even up until adulthood.

Global initiatives, especially Education for All (EFA) and Universal Basic Education (UBE), which are part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are major influences on the approach to provision for children and are suggestive of global expression of interest in ECE. Woodhead (2005) finds the human rights argument for investing in early childhood development as the most convincing of all as it does not rest on scientific evidence, cost-benefit analyses or political context. The United Nations General Assembly in 1959 adopted the declaration to protect fundamental human rights and in 1989 it adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which legitimized among other rights, children's specific provision, protection, and participation rights, such as the right to shelter, life, education and development. In this document, education is perceived as a major agenda which should be provided by governments through initiating legislative frameworks that would promote well-resourced and high quality programmes (UNESCO, 2010a).

The human rights argument is seen as a rationale for investing in children's programmes and services particularly (Article 6), which urges the commitment of countries to 'ensure to the maximum extent possible, child survival and development'. It recognizes children as rights bearers not as passive recipients of adult interventions (Penn, 2008a) and ECE as an important phase in human development and called on various governments to assist parents and guardians. The call is

to 'render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall insure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children' (Article 18.2) and enable 'children of working parents have the right to benefit from child care services and facilities for which they are eligible' (Article 18.3) (UNICEF, 1959). Globally, it is generally accepted as it provides the basis or rationale for the early childhood programmes (Myers, 1995). Nevertheless, some scholars argue that UNCRC may have marked the beginning of an epoch that visibly positioned children by recognising their voices and rights globally, while others have suggested that this global initiative or declaration is a mere proclamation of intent rather than a legally binding authority for nations. There is evidence that to date, some nations have failed to ratify the convention. Nigeria ratified the CRC on the 19th of April 1991 and evidence suggests that like many other countries of the world, has continued to fail in its responses to the obligations of creating equal access and high quality education and care for children.

3.4 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Poverty is a major global challenge affecting development most especially in Majority World countries. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) defined the agreement which emerged, namely, that poverty reduction and the provision of basic social services need to be at the centre of development policy (UNESCO, 2010a). The vision therefore recognizes 'human development as the key to sustaining social and economic progress in all countries, and recognizes the importance of creating a global partnership for development. The goals have been commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development (The World Bank, 2013). Hulme described the MDGs as 'the world's biggest promise' with an international focus having 'global agreement to reduce poverty at historically unprecedented rates through collaborative multilateral action' (Hulme, 2009: 4). Endorsing the MDGs in the year 2000 marked the commitment of about 189 member states and 23 international organisations to drastically reduce poverty and global illiteracy by providing basic education to all children of school age by 2015. Its eight-goal framework includes eradication of

extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development (Save the Children, 2012; UNESCO, 2010a). International financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank began to fund countries that comply with the IMF structural adjustment policies and conditionalities. Institutions were set up to provide policy advice, economic development, poverty reduction, and monetary regulation and cooperation between countries (International Monetary Fund, 2013b)

Hulme (2009) is of the view that the detailed nature of the MDGs and the effort made to clarify the financing, implementation and monitoring process of the programme, makes it different from other global poverty reduction initiatives. Hulme calls our attention to the divergent perceptions and discourses on the value of the MDGs for instance, modernists who believe that the goals are blueprints for transforming human conditions (such as Sachs, 2005a), and strategic realists, who view the goals not as blueprints for action but as essential tools for stretching ambitions and mobilising political commitment and public support (such as Fukuda-Parr, 2008). Hulme went further to suggest that there are also critics who see the MDGs as well-intentioned but poorly thought through distracting attention from more appropriate targets (or nontargets) and more effective policies and actions (for example, Clemens et al., 2007; Easterly, 2009; Saith, 2006), but also radical critics, who consider the MDGs as conspiracy obscuring the really important 'millennial' questions of growing global inequality, alternatives to capitalism and women's empowerment (for example, Eyben, 2006; Saith, 2006).

Concerning the achievements of the MDGs, evidence suggests that much progress has been made in terms of increase in aid to developing countries and poverty rates have been halved, with about 700 million fewer people living in conditions of extreme poverty in 2010 than in 1990. This view is consistent with Sachs, who is optimistic that 'The end of extreme poverty is at hand – within our

generation...[t]here already exist a bold set of commitments that is halfway to that target: The Millennium Development Goals...are bold but achievable...[t]hey represent a crucial mid station on the path to ending extreme poverty by the year 2025' (2005a: 25). It is estimated that over two billion people gained access to improved sources of drinking water and remarkable gains has been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis. The proportion of slum dwellers in the cities and metropolises of the developing world is declining, low debt burden and an improved climate for trade are levelling the playing field for developing countries, and the hunger reduction target is within reach (United Nations, 2013).

Despite optimism shared in some quarters and success stories described by some scholars and INGOs, different studies reveal that the reality on ground in many Majority World countries is not very promising for instance in the analysis of progress toward the MDGs in Africa. Sahn & Stifel (2003) argue that while there may be noteworthy progress in select number of countries, the picture is bleak in many others. This view is shared by others who describe the targets as ambitious and unrealistic goals towards the reduction of poverty (Bello & Suleman, 2011). The MDGs are criticized for the lack of justification behind some of its objectives; lack of measurements for some goals, uneven or mixed progress with much of its budget spent or diverted to debt relief, natural disaster relief and military aid which do not further development (Reddy & Heuty, 2004).

There is evidence that inequality exists both within and between countries, about 17% of the world's adults (which amounts to 796 million people) lack basic literacy skills, and an estimated 1 billion people will live on the equivalent of \$1.25 or less a day in 2015. 1.2 billion people are still living in extreme poverty, Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that saw the number of people living in extreme poverty rise steadily, from 290 million in 1990 to 414 million in 2010, accounting for more than a third of people worldwide who are destitute. Economic and financial crisis have widened the global jobs gap by 67 million people, and one in eight people still go to bed hungry. Despite some progress globally, nearly one in six children under age five are underweight, and one

in four are stunted yet an estimated 7 per cent of children under age five worldwide are now overweight, another aspect of malnutrition (United Nations, 2013).

In the analysis of the substance of 22 developing countries' Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the policy frameworks of 21 bilateral programmes, Fukuda-Parr (2008) acknowledged that there is noticeable progress in debt reduction. However, reforms to the global trading system, which are expected to promote international integration of poor countries have stalled. There are also claims of stagnation of aid flows as the Doha Round has stalled (Fukuda-Parr, 2008). The failure of implementation is attributed to a number of reasons including budget allocation and funding patterns in developing countries which are considered insufficient for achieving meaningful development. The 2010 Global Monitoring report for instance, acknowledged the inability of most Majority World countries to generate the finance required to keep up with public spending in key areas. It noted that such countries urgently need assistance (UNESCO, 2010c). The international community pledged their commitment in 2002 at the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development to boost aid principally through the international monetary fund to support the efforts of low income countries in their attempt to eradicate poverty. A follow up forum on harmonization between donors to improve the efficiency of aid delivery and also to harmonize the policies of donor countries with that of recipients was held in 2003. Evidence suggests that official development assistance has been declining because donors fall short of their commitment.

In a similar development (Sneath, 2010) identified one of the challenges of the MDGs as the issue of "ownership". He noted that the general belief in most developing countries is that the MDGs is donor-led and fails to take into consideration, local contexts and ability to see programmes to completion.

The Secretary General of the United Nations in a paper presented at the United Nations General Assembly, argues that

National ownership of development strategies is fundamental, as one-size-fits all policies and programmes are bound to fail owing to wide variations among countries in terms of their capacity (resources, institutions, administration) and historical and geographical circumstances. Ownership is also vital to ensure national commitment to development goals. Successful countries have pursued pragmatic, heterodox mixtures of policies, with enhanced domestic capacities. Countries should therefore be encouraged to design and implement their own development strategies and to strengthen their domestic capacities. Global partnerships should support such national development strategies and domestic capacity-building efforts. (Ki-Moon, 2010:13)

(Fukuda-Parr, 2008) has articulated opposition to the application of globally set targets in a national planning without taking into consideration, the distinctive and unique local context. He argues that local authorities had made preparations regarding MDGs for a number of years based on their assessment and knowledge of local limitations and ability to see programmes through. He noted that despite the commitments of some governments to the course of the MDG agenda they had other choices regarding the timing and what resource was a priority. Fukuda-Parr also observed a high degree of commitment to MDGs as an overall policy objective and endorsement of a global consensus, he however noted that action programmes are selective. He argues that the key issue is not whether the countries have taken ownership of MDGs as such, but how this is interpreted, which of the MDG priorities are being implemented, and what policies are being adopted.

Nigeria faces significant development challenges and has similar characteristics of other countries in SSA which are less endowed with natural resources. As stated earlier, Nigeria remains a paradox. It is uniquely positioned as the 7th largest producer of crude oil, rich in other mineral resources but one of the poorest in the world with high external debt burden which according to the Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister for Finance, Okonjo-Iweala, is estimated to be \$6.67 billion as at the first quarter of 2013. Successive governments have embarked on comprehensive reforms aimed at promoting inclusive growth and poverty reduction most of which have failed (Okonjo-Iweala & Osafo-Kwaako, 2007).

Failure at reforms and various poverty alleviation programmes is attributed to poor coordination, the absence of a comprehensive policy framework, excessive political interference, ineffective targeting of the poor, the unwieldy scope of programmes, the duplication of functions, lack of sustainability mechanisms, and a lack of involvement of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (Nigerian National Planning Commission, 2004). Although national treasuries and high officials have benefited from the proceeds, expanded oil production in Nigeria has left 70% of the population below the income threshold of \$1 per day (Tilly, 2004). The implication is that education sector including ECE suffers neglect like other sectors of economy.

Although the International Monetary Fund country report on Nigeria (2013a) suggests that there are indications that the economy is growing strongly, it equally observed that there are ongoing governance challenges, that over 60 percent of the population still live below the poverty line, and growth is concentrated mainly in the labour intensive, subsistence based and informal non-oil sector such as agricultural and trade sectors. This has a disappointing outcome in unemployment which has risen from 14.8% in 2003 to 24% in 2010. It equally cited low levels and low quality of public spending in key service delivery sectors which contributes to high unemployment and low attainment of MDGs. Furthermore, government spending on health is low. A 2012 ranking of health systems in Africa ranks Nigeria 44th out of 52 while the World Health Organisation ranks Nigeria 187 out of 190 in 2002. Recent evaluations and surveys indicate this has not changed which is suggestive of the fact that Nigeria is not on track to fulfil MDGs 4 and 5 that relate to a reduction in maternal and child mortality.

3.5 Education for All (EFA) outlooks in sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria

Education is considered a powerful tool for equalizing life chances and bridging the gap between the rich and the poor and source of increasing economic growth hence this global initiative (Education for All) has UNESCO as its lead agency. This initiative is focused on providing quality

basic education for all adults, children, and youth by 2015. The 1990 declaration specifically states that 'Every person - child, youth and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs' (World Conference on Education for All, 1990: 3). The emphasis on basic education which includes primary, lower-secondary, and quite recently, ECE is suggestive of the determination of countries of the world to ensure that all children particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to the most basic form of education. This goal is to be achieved through partnership with governments, civil societies and non-governmental organisations; developmental agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank (World Bank, 2006). The Jomtien 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (World Conference on Education for All, 1990) and the follow up in Dakar ten years later in April 2000, with an expanded focus on Early Childhood Education and Care called “Learning begins at Birth”, marked the world’s commitment to promoting the right to early education. Six goals enshrined in the Dakar Framework for Action include expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, improving the quality of education, literacy and life-skills, promoting Universal Primary Education (UPE) and gender equality (World Conference on Education for All, 1990). With these declarations, ECE became an essential part of basic education and public responsibility in many countries.

There has been remarkable progress towards achieving these goals, for instance, compared to some decades ago, enrolment in primary and secondary education had doubled with some countries at the verge of achieving universal primary education (UNESCO, 2012b; Watkins, 2013). Nevertheless, they equally noted that progression toward achieving the goal of education for all by 2015 was not only stalled and unequal but bleak in some countries of the world including Sub-Saharan Africa. Watkins (2013) observed that Africa is experiencing lack of access to school and at the same time, learning in school. This is because many children are not accessing school and those enrolled are

not learning. A situation he says can be rightly described as a regional emergency that is responsible for the prevalent poverty, inequality and youth unemployment in the region.

Despite commendable efforts in many countries and pledges by about 164 world leaders to reduce illiteracy and with the set date of 2015 as the year for achieving the millennium goals in education, access to provision remains a major issue in many countries. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO, 2012b) stated that 61 million children of primary school age were out of school globally between 2008 and 2010 with about 31 million of these children in Sub-Saharan Africa. In some countries, children drop out of school before reaching college and large number of children in the poorest countries of the world do not complete primary school (UNESCO, 2012b, Justin W. van Fleet et al., 2012). This is particularly true of children from marginalized and low income households in both low and middle income countries alike. This group of children have the tendency of enrolling late and dropping out early as a result of fees and other costs related to their schooling (UNESCO, 2012b)

Funding patterns across different countries in SSA pose a major challenge. (Arnold, 2004) noted that in most Majority World countries less than 1% of the total education budget is allocated to early childhood programmes and even when health expenditures are included, the allocation remains small. UNESCO (2010c; UNESCO, 2011) has criticized the current assistance to basic education in SSA which stagnated since 2007. The reports noted that the annual requirement for meeting the EFA target by 2015 is about US \$16 billion but regrettably, donors fail to give enough priority to low income countries. It is estimated that it only received US \$2.05 billion. This accounts for less than half the aid to basic education. While there is evidence of increase in enrolment in primary education, secondary and higher education is neglected and underfunded. Within Sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that Ethiopia has about 2.3 million out of school children; Ghana about 567,000; Niger has 1.1 million; Kenya has 1 million; Mali has 0.8 million; Cote d'Ivoire has 1.1 million; Burkina Faso has 1.1 million and South Africa 0.7 million (UNESCO, 2012b). The

implication is that the Dakar objective of Education for all by 2015 was unrealistic and not feasible for many thus confirming EFA monitoring report that the 2015 target was not achievable.

Nigeria is not too distant from the depressing picture painted by various global monitoring reports. Meeting the learning needs of children has been a huge challenge. For instance, it had an estimated 10.5 million (about 47%) of the global out of school population and is first on the world's ranking of out of school children (United Nations, 2013). In 2008, Nigeria's out of school population contributed to more than 10% of the total number of out of school children globally (UNESCO, 2012b). Albeit committed to comprehensive vision of education, it was listed as one of the countries that never met the target of EFA by 2015 compared with countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Namibia and Rwanda. A number of factors undermined the achievement of EFA in Nigeria. Geographical, economic, cultural and social disparities exclude children and families from provision and supply of educational services and resources particularly those in crisis prone regions, in rural and deprived urban areas which lack infrastructure and a qualified work force. There is also high population of out of school children among the migrant groups in both the North and Niger delta regions. Literature on the government's budgetary allocation and public spending on education is abysmally poor and the government has continued to fail in its commitment to all levels of education.

Nigeria experienced an economic downturn and the structural adjustment programme (SAP) put in place to assuage its effect resulted in the reduction of government funding of education and failure to meet its obligations in terms of payment of teachers' salaries and provision of infrastructures at all levels of education (Igbuzor, 2006). Poor funding has led to a poor state of educational infrastructure and inadequately equipped classrooms. The enrolment rate in primary education has decreased from 84.2 percent in 1990 to 83.3 percent in 2010. UNESCO country profile suggests that 5% of the Federal Government of Nigeria's UBE matching grant to states should be allocated to pre-primary education for children aged 3-5 years (UNESCO, 2006). Regrettably federal

government expenditure on education between 1997 and 2000 was below 10%; and 6.4% in 2010. This is grossly below the UNESCO recommendation of 26% of the country's national budget and when compared to some countries in Africa for instance South Africa at 25.8%, Cote d'Ivoire at 30.0%, Ghana at 31% and Uganda at 27%.

Government Expenditure on the Education Sector between 1981- 2011

Year	Capital Expenditure On Education	Recurrent Expenditure On Education	Total Expenditure on Education
1981-1989	2685.9	9845.0	22,530.9
1990-1999	36614.4	19945.0	56,559.4
2000	23,342.60	57,956.64	81,299.24
2001	19,860.00	39,882.60	59,742.6
2002	9,215.00	80,530.88	89,745.88
2003	14,680.20	64,782.15	79,462.35
2004	21,550.00	76,524.65	98,074.65
2005	27,440.80	82,795.06	110,235.9
2006	35,791.80	119,000.00	154,791.8
2007	48,293.51	150,800.00	199,093.5
2008	50,488.30	164,000.00	214,488.3
2009	40,005.00	137,116.00	177,121.0
2010	43,644.65	158,640.00	202,284.7
2011	51,830.00	152,639.00	204,469.0

Table 3.1 Source: Central Bank of Nigeria's Statistical Bulletin, 2011

While Nigeria aims to expand and improve early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, evidence suggests that provision for children in ECE is dominated by the private sector for-profit providers who charge fees that exclude low income families and marginalised children from education and care. Poverty reduces the chances of enrolment in education for children in Nigeria particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The prospect of non-completion of schooling is higher for the low-income group. Conflicts and terrorism is another setback in achieving the goals of EFA this is evident in the ongoing crisis in the

Niger Delta region and the threat and killings of people by Boko- Haram a religious sect in Northern Nigeria that is opposed to anything associated with western civilization and education.

3.6 Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives on Policy Making

The difficulty faced by some scholars in the attempt to define the concept of policy has been highlighted by Aminu, Tella & Mbaya (2012) and Ball (1994, cited in Fimyar, 2014). Aminu in particular observed the lack of specific format or generally accepted procedure for defining government public policy in the Nigerian context, thus suggesting that there is less agreement on universal or standard definition of public policy. In spite of this, literatures on public policy acknowledge the role of well -formulated and effectively implemented policy in the achievement of stated goals and objectives of nation states or governments globally (see Mackay, 2011; Qureshi, 2015).

Public policy reflects the numerous actions, regulatory measures, decisions or efforts made by governmental entities in their attempt to deal with public issues confronting society or citizens of a nation, some of which could be economic, educational, related to foreign policy, agricultural, health, cultural, political, or social (Aminu et al., 2012). Key issues are resolved by enacting laws, passing regulations and initiating programmes that are considered relevant to the problem. Government entities in conjunction with actors and interest groups from within and sometimes outside the government (national and international experts including INGOs), influence, shape and exercise control over the formation and implementation of policies and reforms.

Criticising the positivist stance, which views policy as a product of governmental action, Fimyar, (2014: 8) argues that it is a 'position that is conceptually lacking and methodologically limited'. He cites the poststructuralist stance, which suggests that policy-making is much broader than 'the work of official (state) institutions involving both the material and discursive contexts in which policy is made'. Policy involves not only policy directives but 'negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy-making' (Ozga, 2000,

cited in Fimyar, 2014: 8). Ball (1994) views policy as both text and discourse. For Ball, policy is the result of numerous agendas and concessions. He also highlights the power relations in policies, which is exercised through the 'production of truth and knowledge, as discourses' (Ball, 1994: 21). Describing policy as a discourse, Ball argues that it involves 'what can be said, and thought, [...] about who can speak, when, where and with what authority' (Ball, 1994: 22).

Policies are not static, rather, they are modified or adjusted from time to time, 'in the context of learning, debate, contention among a variety of stakeholders, changes in the world and in society' (Walker et al., 2001: 283). According to Walker (2000: 11), policymakers are often confronted with varied policy choices resulting in outcomes that are 'far-reaching yet difficult to predict' hence, there is need for policymakers to initiate policies that have the best chance of contributing to the health, safety and well-being of their constituencies' (see also Lodge & Hood, 2002)

Despite numerous declarations and attempt at reforms, designing and successfully implementing well intended policies and programmes remains a huge challenge for many governments. Weaver (2009) for instance, observed that outcomes may or may not always be consistent with the goals and objectives of policy designers thus leading to poor government performance or outright failures. Hallsworth (2011) noted that attempts to reform UK policy-making have failed to deal with real-life pressures policy-makers face as evidently, huge gaps exist between theory and actual practice. Hallsworth attributes the gaps to 'unrealistic models of policy making' (p.5) and failure to provide the support that is required to 'turn desired practices into reality' (Hallsworth, 2011: 5). This is consistent with Weaver (2010: 2) who said that 'potential implementation problems in policy initiatives rarely receive sustained, systematic, detailed and visible attention before a decision is made on those initiatives'.

3.6.1 Theories of Policy Implementation

There are differing approaches to policy implementation. One approach is a top-down approach where policies are centrally designed or determined by policy designers at the national level. This is

also referred to as the 'governing elite phenomenon' (Deleon, 2001, cited in Pülzl & Treib, 2007: 91). In this approach, the emphasis is on the ability of decision makers to 'produce unequivocal policy objectives and on controlling the implementation stage' (Pülzl & Treib, 2007: 90) with generalizable advice and centrally focused implementation mechanisms (see Matland, 1995). For instance, Sabatier (2005: 19) and Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) listed the following conditions or criteria for successful policy implementation

Policy objectives are clear and consistent; the program is based on a valid causal theory; the implementation process is structured adequately; implementing officials are committed to the program's goals; interest groups and (executive and legislative) sovereigns are supportive and there are no detrimental changes in the socioeconomic framework conditions (cited in Pülzl & Treib, 2007: 92)

In spite of these recommendations, Mazmanian and Sabatier acknowledge the difficulty of achieving faultless order, arrangement or control over the implementation process in everyday practice as a result of unfavourable circumstances that could give rise to failure.

Critical of the top-down approach to policy implementation, advocates of the bottom-up approach (see for instance, Elmore, 1979, Berman, 1980, Hjern, 1982 cited in Matland, 1995) emphasise the need for the involvement of numerous actors, beneficiaries and implementers at the grass roots level in the policy process. Berman (1978, cited in Matland, 1995) argues that while government policies may be designed by players at macro or national levels, street-level bureaucrats or target populations are more in tune with everyday challenges or problems encountered in actual implementation. Berman is of the view that huge disparities exist in the actual implementation of the same national policies and programmes in different local contexts and also that factors within the context of implementation which policy designers have no control over, could overshadow the centrally created rules. Advocates of the bottom-up approach therefore call for more involvement or participation of local actors in the development of programmes and policies. The argument put

forward is that if local actors are not given the latitude to adapt programmes to their local context, such programmes or policies are bound to fail. Geyer & Cairney therefore suggest that we

Rely less on central government driven targets, in favour of giving local organizations more freedom to learn from their experience and adapt to their rapidly-changing environment; to deal with uncertainty and change, encourage trial-and- error projects, or pilots that can provide lessons, or be adopted or rejected relatively quickly; encourage better ways to deal with alleged failure by treating errors as sources of learning or setting more realistic parameters for success/failure and encourage a greater understanding, within the public sector, of the implications of complex systems and terms such as emergence of feedback loops (Geyer & Cairney, 2015: 10).

3.6.2 The Policymaking Process

Agenda Setting

A public policy cycle involves stages such as the setting of agenda which includes the recognition of existing problems, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation (see Mackay, 2011, Barkenbus, 1998). It is an ongoing process that begins with establishing the context. In other words, affected stakeholders or actors identify problems, raise concerns and demand government action or intervention aimed at addressing the problems thus pushing such issues unto the political sphere. An agenda is set and pushed through various organs of government for discussion and possible action. As Jann & Wegrich (2007) suggest, Agenda setting involves governmental officials, people outside the government, yet closely associated with those officials. They suggest that agenda setting often results in choices between different lists of problems, strategies and instruments that eventually shape policy development in latter stages of a policy cycle. Jann & Wegrich (2007) quoted policy study scholars such as Schattschneider (1960: 46) as saying that 'agenda-setting, emerged from conflict between two actors, with the less politically powerful actor seeking to raise attention to the issue (conflict expansion) others suggested that agenda-setting results from a process of filtering of issues and problems, resulting in non-decisions (issues and problems that are deliberately excluded from the formal agenda)'.

Policy formulation and implementation

Problems that are identified are transformed into government programmes with envisioned plans, clearly stated objectives with intentions and commitments to achieve desired outcomes. Jann & Wegrich (2007: 48) noted that the need for improved practice and long term planning led to the development of techniques and tools of more rational decision-making in different countries for instance the Planning Programming Budgeting Systems (PPBS) in the US. Critics however warn that while interest in systematic techniques or tools has not waned, such tools are not necessarily direct solutions to policy implementation as their 'perceived relevance' is subject to changes (see Barkenbus, 1998). Barkenbus went on to highlight the role of expertise in the policy making process. He argues that expert knowledge is crucial in the policy process as it creates 'opportunities for enlightened decision making' (Barkenbus, 1998: 6). Hence, in the absence of expertise, policymakers tend to formulate policy options based on perspectives of special and powerful interests.

Clearly, programmes and policies are not self-implementing or self-executing, therefore the success of any policy is in part dependent on effective coordination between persons and administrative agencies charged with the responsibility of the organization and implementation. Compliance and standard setting is often monitored through regulations. Barkenbus (1998: 6) maintains that 'expertise, to some extent, is located within administrative/regulatory bodies or organizations who also rely heavily on outside experts'.

In his work titled *implementation analysis to improve government performance*, Weaver (2010) explains the role of effective implementation in the success of any policy reform and the likelihood of encountering challenges in the course of implementation. Often, policy makers fail to address or prepare for problems that consistently emerge thus leading to failed policies or an inability to achieve stated objectives. He therefore calls for a framework for implementation analysis and

planned responses that could highlight imminent problems early in the policymaking process. He is of the view that this could improve government performance once a policy or program is initiated (Weaver, 2010).

Potential challenges and possible strategic responses to policy initiatives identified by Weaver include the issues of interpretation; organizational mission and organizational coordination; resource and organizational capacity constraints; timeline and target compliance; political interference and program operator issues (Weaver, 2010: 3). He further suggests that lack of knowledge on the part of policymakers and an inability to reach agreement on crucial issues in proposed programmes and policies is in part responsible for poor policy implementation because such policies are passed into law with undefined or vague elements. The implication is that it leaves the difficult task of policy interpretation to numerous and varied implementers.

With respect to organisational missions and coordination issues, Weaver (2010) observed that policymakers fail to take cognisance of organizational capacity of implementing agencies or bodies to see policy reforms through. The fact remains that implementing bodies have unique culture and mission that enables them to function in a particular order hence they fail to adapt to reforms and policy proposals that do not necessarily fit into their organizational mission. This highlights the need for policymakers to take the most appropriate decision in terms of either creating new implementing agencies or working with existing ones that promote the aims and objectives of new policies and programmes, ensuring that goals are clearly stated and adhered to, promoting inter-agency workings or collaboration in order to minimise poor service delivery, then analysing implementation process to identify potential problems and challenges.

Weaver said that resources, timeline issues and organizational capacity are major constraints in policy implementation. In his view, most politicians or policy makers focus more on policy objectives rather than on human, financial and material resources required for effective implementation which includes 'building and retaining a critical stock of hard-to-acquire-and-

replace resources such as specialized expertise, capital equipment and reputation, resource flow of funding and other program inputs that are used in the short-term' (Weaver, 2010: 3). He also noted that even where these resources are readily available, a realistic timeframe is required to achieve meaningful results. Yet in a bid to score political points, politicians and policy makers fail to take into consideration the many challenges involved in policy change.

Interference from politicians and executives in implementing agencies or establishments, impact on policy reforms. Undue influence could be prior to a decision or overturning an existing one. To minimize interference, programmes should be provided with long lasting protection. Apart from the above mentioned executives, numerous program implementers or street level bureaucrats with varied conceptualisations of proposed programmes, to an extent often embark on implementation projecting their own goals and objectives instead of the objectives of program designers (Weaver, 2010). Poor program performance according to Weaver, could arise from insufficient incentive. For government policies and programmes to yield the desired outcomes, Weaver highlighted the need for clear implementation guidelines, aligning the goals of implementers with that of the programme, monitoring, measuring and reward performance with provision for sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

Policy Evaluation

Policies can be examined or evaluated against outcomes. The aim is to determine if, and how well a policy has worked particularly with respect to stated goals and objectives. Based on the findings of the evaluation, reversals could be recommended where necessary. In different contexts, policy evaluation is seldom carried out. Barkenbus (1998: 8) is of the view that the reason why evaluation is ignored or uncomfortable facts are repressed in some contexts relates to the embarrassment often faced by both policy makers and implementers particularly, those who 'function in a political milieu mileau where success is critical for re-election'.

3.7 Policy transfer in ECE

International donors have been central in the transfer of ECE policies from the global North to the global South. Policy transfer connotes 'a process by which knowledge of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present)' is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000: 5). These externally-determined policies have an influence on virtually every sphere of the importing society or system such as 'the area of fiscal and monetary policies; economic structure and ownership; social sphere; health; education; political; governance; public administration; judiciary; corruption; electoral process and civil society' (Khor, 2005: 5). Agencies in policy transfer may directly advise government departments already committed to importing policies. In other cases, the agent may be advocating a transferable lesson by lobbying government. In such instances advocates of transfer are clearly operating within the milieu of domestic politics (Smith, 2002). They help transfer the intellectual matter that underpins policies. They can provide the rhetoric, the language and scholarly discourse to give substance and legitimacy to certain preferred positions in the manner of discourse coalitions (Stone, 2001).

Globalization to a large extent has aided the transmission of knowledge and transfer of policies across continents and borders. Policy transfer within the context of this study relates to the involvement of multilateral international non-governmental agencies (INGOs) such as the World Bank, the United Nations and its partner agencies which include UNESCO, UNICEF, and WHO, that take up the mantra of 'good practice' as models for other nations to implement. They advocate for public investment and provision of quality childcare services for children in early years education particular in developing countries. From the perspective of these donor agencies, the aid transfer is considered concessional and non-commercial however a closer look reveals conditions relating to the delivery of the aid and services. It sometimes involves direct fund transfers or technical support and these agencies draw on discourses and research conducted mainly in the global North

particularly North America and Europe as a basis for informing changes in policies and for children in the World Majority countries.

3.8 Involvement of international non-governmental organizations in ECE in Sub-Saharan Africa

The commitment of international communities to human development, improved quality of life and accessible education for all persons is evident in various treaties and Human Rights Bills dating as far back as the 1940s. These treaties recognised the rights to primary and other levels of education, but made no mention of Early Childhood Education or Early Childhood Development. However, the 1990 Jomtien Declaration of Education for All and learning begins at birth gave force to ECE. An international commitment to children was reiterated a decade later at the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000:12). Quality of education was central to these declaration for instance Article 3(1) of the declaration of EFA states ‘to this end, basic education services of quality should be expanded...’ and the Dakar Framework for Action notes that ‘starting from early childhood and extending throughout life, the learners of the twenty-first century [...] require access to high quality educational opportunities’. As Aidoo (2008) suggests, the engagement of key donor or development partners such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank in ECE in the promotion and funding were important to secure government commitment in different countries.

Campaigners such as the World Bank and its partner agencies are the main facilitators of knowledge and policy transfers in early childhood education in different countries. Steiner-Khamisi (2013) also suggests that the World Bank and OECD influence global rules or standards well as monitors of national reforms. These key players and agencies share common aspirations and similar goals of achieving improved access to high quality provision for children particularly in developing countries. Thus as major financiers and key players in knowledge, policy transfer in ECE and other development programmes (particularly in the Global South), they set out initiatives, determine standards, provide funding and technical support and call on various governments to improve not

just the level of access for children but also commitments by way of funding, workforce development, and establishment of frameworks for effective service delivery, but also call on governments to incorporate ‘best practices’ and provide evidence of child ‘outcomes’. Penn (2008) argues that a good number of government policies on early childhood are influenced by donor rhetoric, especially that of the World Bank which claims that their intervention in children’s services and programmes is backed by evidence.

Apart from the focus on education, there is an articulated commitment on behalf of INGOs to peace, political, economic, and human development as well as health and well-being of the people of Africa. They have been at the forefront of promoting the agenda of the UNCRC, MDGs and the Dakar convention through the provision of aid and support to governments, children, and families. Confirming the roles of INGOs, Save the Children (2012) stated that the efforts of multilateral and bilateral donors as well as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) have been focused on helping the world’s poorest people to access the basic goods and services for survival – food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, and education. Similarly, in the thematic studies on early childhood care and development, Myers (2001) stated that financing within the international community for projects related to young children was focussed on survival, and more specifically on health and nutrition. Guided by a consortium of donors, and by the energetic promotion efforts of a Child Survival Revolution by UNICEF and the World Health Organization, major lending agencies, bi-lateral organizations, major foundations and the larger international NGOs emphasized immunization, oral rehydration, feeding, and other actions that were directed primarily at reducing infant and child mortality rates.

Donor interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries is led by international agencies such as the World Bank who, alongside with its associates, promotes its policy agendas. United Nations (UN) agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United Nations International

Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) suggest that investing in ECE in poor or developing countries would lead to improvement in recipient countries. Some other UN-based agencies include the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) concerned with refugees, the United Nations World Food Programme (UNWFP) which is focused on food security, the International labour organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). These agencies directly or indirectly influence early childhood education programmes in Africa.

The World Bank, a huge campaigner for ECE, frames its arguments for the provision for children in the global South mainly on knowledge and experience of child development and scientific studies conducted in the global North. By drawing on its International Knowledge Bank (IKB) the World Bank is said to influence reforms by monitoring developments in the nation, securing funding, and eventually promoting the transfer of "best practices" across countries (Steiner-Khamsi, 2007). The World Bank is considered one of the major external education investors for developing countries, with a portfolio of about US \$9 billion, and operations in 71 countries as of January 2013 (World Bank, 2013a). To a large extent, the World Bank contributes to childhood debates and is said to be lobbied by many organisations that regard it as a major player in the field (Penn, 2002). The World Bank collaborates with governments of different countries, INGOs and a Consultative Group of Early Childhood Care and Development. It is also involved in knowledge sharing, capacity building, technical assistance and advice on policies that affect young children. As the 'largest single source of external funding for health and education in developing countries, much of its investment has been directed towards helping young children as the human capital of the future' (The World bank, 2000, cited in Penn, 2005: 72)

The World Bank is an international bank composed of UN members (and Kosovo) with the US as the largest shareholder and thus nominates the president of the World Bank. The bank provides loans and grants to developing countries for projects related to human development, agriculture, and environmental protection (according to the World Bank) but that it has also been criticised for not

paying enough attention to human rights concerns and environmental issues. According to Penn (2008a), the World Bank is a key player in the area of ECE and it influences decisions regarding the direction and donor policies in the global South particularly Africa. The implication therefore is that a good number of policies adopted and implemented by African countries originate elsewhere. In line with this argument, Tijani Alou (2009) is of the view that different policies transferred from the North under the name or guise of cooperation is a common phenomenon in many African countries.

The Bank's commitment to early childhood development and poverty reduction is accomplished through maintaining a knowledge-base on ECE to support its operational staff in designing ECE projects, increasing the lending for ECE as part of the Bank's EFA, health and social protection (HD) portfolio and secondly by extending the knowledge base on ECE and building capacity among the Bank's task managers and field practitioners in the design and preparation of ECE interventions. This commitment is fulfilled by responding to just-in-time requests from operations staff, proactively providing technical assistance for policy dialogue with governments, preparing analytical, economic and sector studies and regional strategy papers, designing, supervising, and evaluating ECE projects, providing analytical frameworks and tools and resources for effective implementation of projects and closely monitoring projects (World Bank Group, 2011a)

UNESCO, in partnership with some other agencies, coordinates the efforts to achieve the goals of EFA and early childhood goals which include promoting early childhood networking and partnership, supporting early childhood policy development and strengthening family support policies. UNICEF also engages with countries to promote integrated approaches to the provision of ECE through the provision of programmes and policies in children's learning, lending helping hand in the areas of health, nutrition, child protection and the development of projects related to the supply of water. Its delivery systems for commodities and services which are coordinated at the community level by local governments and non-governmental organizations is a testament of its

commitment to families and caregivers. The perceived roles of UNICEF in Ghana which is similar to other African countries is captured in the statements made by UNICEF program officer for education in Ghana who stated that the:

Purpose and very existence of UNICEF is to champion the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Early childhood issues, therefore, form the foundations of UNICEF's Medium Term Strategic Plan. In Ghana, UNICEF has been providing major financial support to government public early childhood activities, including curriculum development, training and policy implementation. The work of UNICEF had, therefore, been geared towards reducing the gap between the rich and the poor by supporting public early childhood services (Education International, 2009:9)

Other agencies involved in the development of ECE in Sub-Saharan Africa include the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the Educare project in South Africa. Its first programme supporting ECE. ECE started in Jamaica in 1966. The Aga Khan Development Network began planning for Madrassa Resource Centres (MRCs) in some East African countries such Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and formulating internationally informed approaches to Islamic early childhood education and development. The first programme was at Liwatoni Mosque in Mombasa in 1986. A small number of other donors and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have come forward in support of ECE in various African countries (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008). Save the Children, the Christian Children's Fund and many other charitable foundations have also continued to contribute to ECE in Africa.

3.9 Criticisms of INGOs

There is evidence that INGOs have significantly influenced the development of ECE particularly in the developing countries. A good number of studies, discourses, and debates on the provision for children reveal that the World Bank and its partner agencies are highly involved in the dissemination of early childhood educational policies and knowledge transfers from the northern metropolises to the Majority World countries or Global South. Despite funding and support, INGOs have come under criticisms and undeniably, there are problematic features of ECE global interventions, policy, and knowledge transfers. Particularly, the World Bank and its agencies are

criticized for being agenda driven, prescriptive, uncritically publicizing and enforcing a specific ethos and conceptualization of ECE for children globally regardless of specific economic, socio-political, cultural contexts and experiences of children and societies. For instance, (Nsamenang, 2008:136) argues that 'UN organizations sustain and proselytize throughout the world forms of ECD that are functional in Europe and North America as the "right" way to make progress with young children'.

Supporting this argument, Boyden (1990) noted that highly selective, stereotyped perceptions of childhood have been exported far from their origins in industrial social conditions. These exports assume the 'form of curriculum models, more generally as 'ways of thinking' about childhood and are being applied in contexts far removed from their cultural origin' (Woodhead, 1996:11). Some critics view this import as a reflection of the hegemony of the global North over the South, for example in the analysis of the factors influencing the development of psychology in SSA. Nsamenang described knowledge import and educational reforms as a 'scientific acculturation which is not only an imperialist academic domination of Africans but also self-imposed emulation of Euro-American models' (1995: 8) and Woodhead (1996) also noted that early childhood programmes have become tools for cultural imperialism, driven by the politically, economically, and culturally dominant Minority World through various combinations of international aid, child development and curriculum models, training, and research.

Typically, INGOs, particularly the World Bank, promote and enforce foreign models of ECE in the global South. It has acted, over the past decade, increasingly as a global monitor and lender of "best practices" (Steiner-Khamsi, 2007). They employ catchphrases and rhetoric, and rational arguments that intervention in ECE is in the best interest of children and society. Alongside its partner agencies, in the World Bank exports to Majority World countries including SSA, 'ready-made intellectual packages' (Kagitçibasi, 1984, cited in Nsamenang, 2007: 8) by emphasizing developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and uniform standard of childcare for children

globally without taking cognisance of the cultural diversity and social changes in other societies. Penn noted that INGOs claim their interventions are ‘impeccably informed by science and providing the study is an empirical one, however specific the investigation, it can be extrapolated to build up a picture of what children need’ (2002:119). Penn rejects this view and quickly warns that this globalizing notion of developmentally appropriate practice is pervasive.

While the frameworks on child development are considered appropriate and identified as a sign of progress by various interest groups, some scholars are critical of the attempt to devise a universal and homogenous framework for children globally. For instance, Woodhead (1996) objects to the global distribution of any one single framework on quality for two reasons. First, it will lead to a world of uniformity, a standardised recipe for the quality of childhood. Second is that implementing contextually-inappropriate standards of quality will prove more disruptive than constructive in fostering children’s development. A first step in countering these trends is to become more aware that dominant images of quality in early childhood are constructed in a particular economic and cultural context. In line with this argument. Brooker & Woodhead (2010) also noted that although some universal principles explain how children might learn and develop, in practice, learning and development are also tempered by circumstances and is grounded in local knowledge that they cannot be supported without an understanding of local contexts.

The notion of Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) which gained momentum amongst some ECE experts, practitioners, and scholars represents a set of practice guidelines for working with children from birth to the age of eight (Bredekamp, 1987; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) and highlights actions and practices to be undertaken by adults or key persons at different stages of development in the learning process. DAP is based on the opinions of US experts on ECE and knowledge of child development, theories, and research, it is assumed to be applicable to all children and it aims is to improve quality of learning experiences by utilizing developmentally appropriate materials and activities. The handbook for early childhood programming (Evans et al.,

2000) which has the approval of international donors and is firmly supported by experts some of whom work on the assumption that children are generally the same, just as teachers are the same (Katz, 1998). Penn argues that DAP promotes stereotypes which compartmentalizes experiences into domains such as emotional, social, physical and intellectual. These standards, based on North American and western ideals and are 'applied as the gold standards by which to measure forms of Africa's ECD. They deny equity to and recognition of Africa's ways of provisioning for its young, and thereby deprive the continent a niche in global ECD knowledge waves' (Nsamenang, 2005:136).

In various analysis of the World Bank policy transfers and reforms in the global South (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; LeVine, 2004; Nsamenang, 2005; Nsamenang, 2006; Pence & Nsamenang, 2008; Steiner-Khamsi, 2003), criticisms are voiced with regard to the manner in which Anglo-American policies are promoted without paying attention to the particular context in the recipient countries. There is consensus among these writers that the 'scientifically proven' evidence as portrayed by INGOs in ECE programmes and policies in global South are implicitly rooted in western values, and represent the construct of childhood in Europe and America and is suggestive of specific child development trajectories.

There is also growing concern and long standing debates on the relevance and functionality of imported Anglo-American models of ECE to the specific cultural context; peculiar needs of children and ideologies of societies in the rest of the world where there are established traditions, values and culture of raising children. ECE policy propositions are formulated and transferred by multilateral agencies and adopted by recipients in developing countries without considering how propitious the cultural, economic and political dynamics in relation to the development, implementation and sustainability of such policies in the South. It is evident that policy and knowledge transfers in ECE ignores the markedly distinct childhoods and cultural specificities in Sub-Saharan countries and indeed other developing countries to the point that the same policy is

recommended and deemed adequate for all other parts of the world. Penn (2009) condemns the attempt to construct or transfer particular educational programmes from one country to the other without taking into consideration, the cultural values, political priorities of countries all of which determine what is adequate and what form of support children require.

This begs the question of how committed aid dependent governments, poverty stricken and some war thorn societies of the South are to achieving imported global initiatives. How feasible are some of the overtly ambitious goals taking into consideration the political and economic aura of the South and how relevant are ECE initiatives that are rooted in western cultures and values, needs and socio-cultural context of children and families in the South? The argument, advanced by Monaghan (2012) is that the attempt to construct a different type of childhood amounts to passing judgement or suggesting that already existing childhood, cultural values and practices, parenting styles in the South is less adequate or bad. Monaghan views it as an attempts to colonize childhood and create uniform outcomes, irrespective of the context.

While lauding the Bank's notable achievements in the development of ECE, INGOs and other donors have been criticized for mounting pressure on developing and aid dependent countries to expand and support educational reforms which are considered ambitious in terms of scope and in the light of the precarious socio-economic and political specificities, perceptions and challenges in many developing countries. Attention should be drawn to the available resources, the costs and future sustainability of programmes, as well as the characteristics of the learners. In economic terms, there is wide variation between the economies of the North and those of the poorer South. The implication is that the prevalent level of absolute poverty in the South impedes the provision of the most basic needs of children and families.

There are deep rooted issues and critical challenges that undermine ability of the South to effectively implement and sustain institutional changes, transferred policies and programmes. In SSA, for example, there are issues related to the poor state of economic and material resources in

many areas, tight budgets and high public debt burdens, and a lack of political will and corruption which often results in partial and sometimes non-implementation of educational programmes and initiatives. Tijani Alou (2009) quoted Darbon (2001) as saying that these policies are often imposed or thrust on Sub-Saharan African states who lack the capacity or administrative skills required to organize or sustain projects. Steiner-Khamsi (2004) suggests that low-income countries often are forced into embarking on reforms as part of the package of grants.

Another argument advanced is that in importing educational reforms, INGOs fail to take cognizance of issues such as the political, cultural, socio-economic and administrative specificities in most Majority World within which they operate for instance the incidence of high external debt burden, unequal income, the prevalence of absolute poverty, the lack of relevance of transferred policies to the needs of the learner and the society, corruption, conflicts and conflicting ideologies. The fact that most global initiatives fail to yield the desired outcome and in most cases are completely abandoned in some countries comes as no surprise especially in countries where budget allocation to the education sector is low. The fact remains that ubiquitous financial challenges and political instability in developing countries exert pressure on ability to see through, imported programmes and policies which are barely feasible.

Critiques highlight issues of standardization and ownership of policies and programmes transferred by INGOs. In the analysis of policy transfer dynamics in SSA, Tijani Alou suggests that African countries are shaped by policies which originate or are developed elsewhere. He noted that 'African countries appear in this domain as a fertile ground in which to observe exchanges, innovations, experiments and the transfer of a great variety of institutional or political models, perceived chiefly as practical way outs of the perennial crisis that began in the 1970s' (2009: 5). Thus political leaders in developing countries have no option other than to accept the policies imposed by the World Bank and other agencies (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996).

Travelling reforms or policy transfers from one country to another have become the rule. It is also noticeable that the same educational reforms are introduced in different parts of the world, at times concurrently and at times with a time lag (Steiner-Khamsi, 2007). Standardization of public policies is an observable trend in different SSA countries, as states lack the capacity to develop their policies in accordance with the particular concerns of its citizenry. It is obvious that the exact same policies are implemented in many countries at the same time, with no specific regard for their different contexts. Supporting this view, and reacting to the downside of policy transfers and sometimes lack of transparency of multinational organizations, some have strongly argued against the imposition and application of 'one-size-fits-all' development models or 'world standards' (Stiglitz, 2003; Stone, 2001; United Nations General Assembly, 2010). This often results in inappropriate transfer and obviously negates the Paris Declaration which emphasises the need of aligning international policies with national policies and goals in recipient countries. Consequently, this lack of ownership in educational policy reforms like other sector reforms, is in part responsible for the stalling of educational programmes and failures in achieving the desired changes in the world. Stiglitz stressed the need for 'knowledge to be made locally applicable and the adaptation be done by the local "doers of development" and not given as a gift or imposed as a conditionality from the outside' (1999: 204).

The World Bank and other agencies often lay claim to scientific evidence and findings from research as the rationale for the call for global change. Nevertheless, some critics question the methodological approach employed in some of the studies informing policy transfers and changes in ECE for instance problems with unavoidable selection bias (Smith et al., 2000). Others are particularly concerned about the universality, generalizability and interpretation of the research findings and literature which only present the picture of child development in European and North American countries but has become dominant and has formed the premise for change globally (Lamb, 1998; LeVine & New, 2008; Penn, 2009; Rosenthal, 1999; Thomas & Maynard, 2004). Their argument is based on the fact that most of these studies were derived from narrow population

of children from North America, Europe, and other western countries who comprise less than 10% of all children in the world and as such, may well not be easily generalizable beyond its original catchments (Lamb, 1998; Rosenthal, 1999; Smith et al., 2000; Thomas & Maynard, 2004).

Rosenthal warns that while child studies from America may have become a dominant feature and a basis for change in other countries, the US social and political context for early childhood education is considered atypical because 'United States is alone out of 75 industrialised countries without a government sponsored family policy to support subsidised child care or paid maternity leave' (1999b: 17) yet Majority World countries are meant to fund overtly ambitious imported policies and programmes. Penn (2009) noted that while there may be some very general findings about the quality of education and care for children, findings from one type of system, particularly drawn mainly from the results of observations and experiments with white middle class children in North America and Europe, and assumed to be applicable to all children in all circumstances cannot be easily translated to another. This narrow view in research is often overlooked, but it is crucial.

Summary

This chapter analysed ECE within the global context, highlighting different global initiatives and studies informing changes in the provision for children. The human rights and human capital arguments for intervention were discussed. While the studies may have informed changes in policies that marked a new approach in children's learning, some scholars criticize the attempt to create universal childhood without regard for regional values and culture. They argue that context of the studies (North America and Europe), making their application problematic within the global South and Majority world countries. Analysis of the roles of International Non-Governmental Organizations in ECE policy transfers showed that it was an opportunity for INGOs to push forward their agenda. The next chapter will present the discourse and issues of quality in ECE

Chapter Four

Issues of Quality in Early Childhood Education

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the main theme of this thesis. It analyses the discourse of quality within the Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (IECD) and the National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria. The focus is on structural and process elements of quality, and the implementation and impact of government policies in early years settings in Owerri, Nigeria. Reference is made to international discourses and debates on quality in children's learning and development. The first section highlights the evidence base and global initiatives that informed the call for high quality education in the provision for children and families.

4.1 Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care

Providing high quality education that yields positive outcomes for children is at the core of policy programmes and initiatives in early years learning globally. Evidence from research has produced a large body of literature and has included discourses on the need for high quality learning in early childhood education with various stakeholders and interest groups demanding affordable and accessible high quality provision for children particularly the disadvantaged or at risk groups (see for instance (Bennett et al., 2012; Heckman, 2006; Melhuish & Barnes, 2012; Nores et al., 2005; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2001; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Sylva, 2007)). These studies suggest that high quality education and care for children and families mitigate the effects of disadvantage and places children on better footing. High quality provision is linked to improved outcomes or vice versa. Some scholars strongly argue that quality ECE provides a solid foundation for more effective future learning achievements and children's social development. They suggest that although theoretical conceptions of the processes involved may differ considerably, early years education is beneficial for all children because it socializes them for starting school,

especially children from disadvantaged backgrounds, poor, or migrant families (Belsky et al., 2007; Howes et al., 2008; Penn, 2009; Sylva et al., 2004).

In their analysis of quality early years education for children, Dalli et al., (2011) identified different phases in the debates on quality. For instance, they suggest that the period between the late 1960s and 1970s examined whether or not child care was harmful for children. After that time period, what could be considered a second phase in the quality debates, (in the 1980s) attention was directed to variables in the childcare environment that could be controlled to produce high quality. In what they have identified as a third phase in the quality debates, between of the 1980s and early 1990s, attention was turned to the ecological perspective of quality.

At the 2000 EFA framework for action conference held in Dakar, the international community reiterated their commitment to providing universal access to 'good quality education for all children' (UNESCO, 2000). Based on research findings, improving the quality of provision is considered to be the focus of various governments. Institutions and organizations are known to have initiated policy reforms, programmes and frameworks aimed at maintaining 'quality learning for all children'. For instance, the Integrated National Policy Framework for ECE in Nigeria and Tanzania, National Early Childhood Development Policy Framework in Kenya and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework in England were some of the examples of policy initiatives focused on providing equal access to high quality learning for all children. This view is shared by Allen & Whalley (2010: 9) who stated that the 'concept of quality improvement is now embedded within contemporary early years provision and practice'. Similarly, Jalongo et al., (2004) stressed the need for countries to establish policy frameworks that address the needs of children and families through making a variety of culturally responsive and effective programmes available. They suggest that such programmes should satisfy the three fundamental criteria of quality, availability and affordability and should take cognisance of credentialing programmes, establishing adult-to-child ratios, setting curriculum guidelines and improving training of practitioners.

4.2 Introducing the quality debate in early childhood education

Highlighting the vision for quality in today's global world including services for children in early childhood education and care Moss & Dahlberg (2008: 21) stated that:

We live in an age of quality. Every product and service must offer quality; every consumer wants to have it. In this historical context, quality has become reified, treated as if it was an essential attribute of services or products that gives them value, assumed to be natural and neutral. The problem with quality, from this perspective, its management. How can quality be discovered, measured, assured and improved?

Discourses on quality in the provision for children are a common feature in early childhood education and development literature and research. Yet this concept is highly contested and has continued to spark huge debates as a result of the attempt by some groups to arrive at what can be described as a globally consistent standard of quality in early education. Allen & Whalley (2010) observed the extensive use of the term 'quality' and they argue that although defining quality is problematic, the word quality is used to describe 'good' or 'best practice' within the context of children's learning in ECE. While there may be consensus on the need for and benefits of high quality provision in child development and later achievements in adulthood, there is no dominant or single definition of quality hence interpreting and measuring what constitutes high quality for children or whose perspective of quality should be reckoned with remains problematic particularly taking into consideration the subjectivity of different interest groups and stakeholders as well as the varied interpretations of this construct. This view is equally shared by Elfer et al., (2012) who described quality as a 'slippery concept'. They argue that the interpretation of quality in early years setting is varied as:

Different parents will give different priorities to different aspects of the setting, (location, training of staff, programme of activities, approach of the manager, facilities and equipment). When asked what they think is most important, most parents and practitioners list practical things first- safety, hygiene, quality of the food and sufficient staff. However, they also say that whilst these are essential, they are not enough. (p.4)

La Paro, Thomason, Lower, Cassidy and Kinter-Duffy (2012: 1) suggest that this 'lack of clarity in the conceptualization and related ability to operationalize quality has resulted in the utilization and reliance on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale'. Quality is a relative term with varied and subjective meanings and is subject to various interpretations by different stakeholders even within the same society. It is based on cultural values, beliefs of individuals and conceptualization of childhood which differs considerably across and within cultures and societies. Cryer (1999) is of the view that defining quality is contentious as there are different dimensions. It is dependent on who is defining quality, and the particular indicators or dimensions of the service that is being defined. Moss & Dahlberg (2008:1296) affirm that quality is a 'subjective, value- based, relative and dynamic concept'. According to Moss et al., (1994:172), 'quality child care is, to a large extent, in the eye of the beholder'. This implies that quality can be interpreted differently, taking into consideration, the multiple stakeholders in ECE.

Another perspective is that offered by Bennett (2010: xi) who noted that quality is strongly 'linked with socio-cultural expectations and covers wide areas such as quality of governance, structural and process quality, educational concepts and practice (curriculum), child outcomes, and community and parent participation'. Contributing to the quality debate, the European Commission Childcare Network (2004:7) is of the view that 'understanding of quality and arriving at quality indicators is a dynamic and continuous process of reconciling the emphases of different interest groups. It is not a prescriptive exercise'. This view is also shared by Myers (2006) who highlighted the multi-dimensional and context specific nature of quality which varies across regions, culture and populations. Acknowledging the cultural, social and context specific nature of quality, Woodhead, (1996: 90) 'asserts that quality is not a fixed objective standard to be universally applied, but a context specific dynamic process. Quality should not be seen in a restrictive, prescriptive way, but in a holistic relativistic way, where the context of human and material resources and the social ecology of lifestyles, values and expectations of childhood are acknowledged'. Questioning the application of a universal standard as well as the narrow and decontextualized perception of early

childhood education, Woodhead (1996:7) went further to say that 'the debate about quality is an expression of the philosophical dichotomy between universalism and relativism'. Woodhead strongly questions the application or setting of common standards for all children based on what is considered to be general understanding or assumptions of what is best for children generally. His argument is that universalist stance of quality is unachievable because quality is subject to specific conditions, cultural values and practice.

The relativist and objectivist approach is yet another dimension on quality debate. Within the objectivist context, it is assumed that quality does not change constantly and can be agreed upon by stakeholders. Quality from this perspective is identified as a group of features that can be measured in children's learning environment and which impacts on their social and cognitive development (Siraj-Blatchford & Wong, 1999). This view is contested by scholars who argue that this stance focuses on the narrow views of a group rather than the very many and different stakeholders. They also question the suitability of tools created in one social and cultural context, for use in another with completely different objectives and outcomes for children (Boocock, 1995, cited in Siraj-Blatchford & Wong, 1999). From the relativist standpoint, quality is viewed and defined locally, varying according to the social and cultural context and reflecting the multiple perspectives of stakeholders such as parents, children, practitioners, and policy-makers (Mathers et al., 2012). Critics of this approach argue that if quality is only defined on a local level so that it is relevant to individual social and cultural contexts, then nationally defined standards cannot be set, and no universal links to outcomes established.

Criticising the relativist and objectivist standpoints, (Siraj-Blatchford & Wong, 1999:13) noted that both approaches have their limitations and any attempt to 'focus on only one system is to unduly narrow understanding of children's experiences'. They define quality in early childhood education as objective in much of its pedagogic criteria but subjective in its curriculum goals and content. (Siraj-Blatchford & Wong, 1999:16) went on to recommend a 'comprehensive approach to defining

quality in early years education and care. One that recognises the influence of a pre-school system, the views and perceptions of different stake holders and at the same time acknowledges the mutual bearing of different systems on the learning experiences of children'.

4.3 Structural and process characteristics of quality

While there is less agreement on the definition of quality, research evidence identifies process and structural features as two important indicators which are related and combine to produce responsive, sensitive, and effective high quality early years programmes and services (Peisner-Feinberg & Yazejian, 2010). Structural elements of quality relate to factors such as adult-child ratios, teacher education or qualification, recruitment, motivation and retention, class or group size and classroom materials (Cryer, 1999; Howes et al., 1992; Phillips et al., 2000; Vandell & Wolfe, 2000). These indicators refer to the quantifiable and regulated aspects of classrooms and programmes which are easy to measure (Howes et al., 2008) while process features of quality relate to actual experiences or interaction in children's learning environment such as adult/child relationship, peer-to-peer interactions, curriculum and physical environment (Vandell & Wolfe, 2000). Penn (2009) highlighted a number of predictors of quality these key elements of ECE quality which include the 'content/curriculum for children's learning, issues of inclusiveness, respect for diversity, the group size of settings, premises where learning takes place, the involvement of parents and of the wider community, the governance structures necessary for regular programme monitoring and assessment, and system accountability and quality assurance' (2009: 9). Process elements of quality require in-depth observation to measure as they reflect how educational activities are implemented, the characteristics of interactions between teachers and children or among the children themselves (Peisner-Feinberg & Yazejian, 2010).

4.4 Structural elements of quality

4.4.1 Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers are a valuable resource in every educational system (Hanushek, 201; UNESCO, 2005). They are intermediaries through which learning occurs in school settings (Klein & Knitzer, 2006). This implies that the failure or successful implementation of the curriculum and educational programmes for children is to a large extent dependent on the quality of ECE workforce hence it is said that no educational system can rise over and above the quality of its teachers. Herzenberg et al., (2005) are of the view that effective delivery of high quality ECE requires high aptitude. It also requires adequate knowledge of cognitive and social development of children and ability to apply the knowledge of child development into children's classroom activities.

A number of studies and literature explored the relationship between the quality of early years education and the educational qualifications of early years workforce. Notably, there is evidence that educated professionals with specialised training in ECE are central in providing high quality early years learning with the most favourable cognitive and social outcomes for children. The case for teacher education and qualification in relation to the delivery of high quality education for young children was made even stronger by Barnett (2003: 2) who observed that 'better educated teachers are more effective, have more positive, sensitive and responsive inter-actions with children, provide richer language and cognitive experiences and are less authoritarian, punitive and detached'.

The longitudinal study in the UK, the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) (Sylva et al., 2004) is yet another study that came to the conclusion that staff with higher qualifications, leadership skills, and experience working alongside and supporting less qualified staff who have a good understanding of child development and learning are essential elements in high quality ECE. They suggest that the higher the level of educational qualification and training of caregivers, the more responsive and stimulating they are. While acknowledging that teacher quality can be

influenced by a range of factors such as training, terms and conditions of service and class size, some scholars argue that measuring or evaluating teacher quality can be quite challenging and sometimes contentious (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2011) because it depends on observable features such as aptitude, content knowledge and nature of relationship with pupils.

The early childhood education workforce faces a number of problems; for instance, attracting, recruiting and retaining experienced and educated or qualified staff, as well as a lack of requirements for educational qualifications which is associated with low status and low wages. Good pay and good working conditions of staff and the support they are given are key factors for enhancing teachers' performance, thus ensuring quality in ECE. The wages of teaching staff has been found to be the second most important determinant of program quality, with the first being staff-to-child ratios (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2011). Dolton & Van der Klaauw (1999) have shown that levels of compensation and criteria for awarding salary increases have an effect on who goes into teaching, who stays in teaching and for how long. To avert some of these challenges and maintain high quality ECE, Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez (2011) suggest that by way of incentive, teaching should be added to the list of elite professions which are highly paid. The aim is to attract more people. They note that competitive salaries and benefits for teachers are crucial for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers (Dolton & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, citing Ballou & Podgursky, 1997 and Murnane et al., 2009). A minimum level of qualification and clear progressing routes should be set, training and retraining of staff prioritised.

Pre-service and continued professional development has been found to be very useful in equipping teachers. Hence apart from the initial teacher qualification, ongoing professional development for early childhood education workforce is recommended. The OECD (2011a) identified in-service training or teacher development programmes as a means of enhancing practice. Education International (2009) recommends that ECE staff should receive pre-and in-service training of good

quality, continuous professional development, and their salaries and conditions of service should be comparable to those of teachers with the same level of qualifications in other sectors.

4.4.2 Adult Child Ratio

The number of adults who work with a group of children is an important factor in promoting high quality learning and improved outcomes for children. Research and existing literature (Blau, 2000; Blau, 1997; Cryer, 1999; Cryer et al., 1999; Howes et al., 1992) strongly argue that staff/child ratios have an influence on the quality of learning. Some suggest that fewer children per caregiver or adult is associated with higher process quality and on the other hand, higher or large group is associated with lower process quality (Burchinal et al., 2000; Huntsman, 2008). The connection is said to be stronger for younger children or infants than it is for children above the age of three years. Burchinal et al (1995) came to the conclusion that infants with fewer adults tend to have poor communication skills. Huntsman (2008) observed that there is a stipulated number of children that can be supervised as a group at every given time. The grouping is based on the age of the children. He is noted as saying that the younger the children, the smaller the group size. Depending on policy guidelines and regulations in place, the adult child ratio models varies considerably according to countries and settings. For instance. Burchinal et al., (2002) noted that the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the US developed a set of guidelines for child care centres while the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) came up with a developed a set of guidelines for child care homes. NAEYC recommended the child/adult ratio regimes of 3:1 or 4:1 children per adult for infants, 5:1 for toddlers, 7:1 children per adult for 3-year-olds and 8:1 for 4- and 5-year-olds.

4.4.3 Group or Class Size

Group sizes in early childhood settings have been widely researched. However, there are opposing views on the role of class size in children's learning outcomes and development. As some have noted, (Biddle & Berliner, 2002; Blatchford et al., 2003), opinions are polarised between claims

that small classes translates to better quality of teaching and learning, and scholars who insist that the effects of reduced class sizes on learning outcomes are likely to be modest. For instance, some have strongly argued that there is no evidence to show that reduced or small class sizes alone lead to higher student achievement (Glass et al., 1982; Rees & Johnson, 2000). Also, there have been reviews that have been challenged for employing studies known for their methodological issues in terms of validity and reliability of methods and therefore calling into question the conclusions drawn by such studies. See for instance (Hanushek, 1999).

A study described by many scholars as the 'gold standard' for class size research is the Tennessee longitudinal study, the Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (Project STAR) in USA involving nearly 80 schools from 42 school districts and about 7,000 K-3 students from families ranging from very poor to very affluent was carried out in three phases. The first phase was in 1985. The initial finding showed that there was considerable improvement in children's early learning and cognitive studies and that the effect was double for children from minority background. The second phase which began in 1989 explored the lasting benefits of the class size ratios (CSR) for children in standard sized classes. Findings also suggested that irrespective of the location in terms of rural or urban, the children that were previously in smaller classes continued to do well. The third phase was conducted with about 17 children from economically poor areas or districts where smaller class sizes was introduced. Findings indicated that children's performance in reading and mathematics rose from below to above average. A number of actions were taken to reduce class size the US. For instance, the Class Size Reduction (CSR) program in California which aimed to reduce class size to no more than 20 and the Wisconsin State led Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program which targeted high poverty schools was designed to increase student achievement by reducing K-3 class size to no more than 15 students per teacher. Some other states in the US have had class size reduction initiatives.

The meta-analysis by Glass & Smith (1979) revealed that reduced class size can lead to increased academic achievement. They suggested that the major benefits from reduced class size are obtained if the size is reduced below 20 pupils and that students from economically disadvantaged background or ethnic minorities do better in smaller classes and the impact of small class size is felt particularly in reading and mathematics in early primary grades. According to (Finn, 2002), students in smaller classes did better than those in larger classes throughout the K-3 grades. Minority and inner-city children gained the most from smaller classes, and the more years spent in reduced classes, the longer lasting the benefits. This view is consistent with (Burchinal et al., 2002) who also indicated that with smaller group sizes, teachers or caregivers have sufficient time for interactions which often results in better childcare. These studies give evidence to support the claim that the smaller the group size, the more effective the interactions thus creating room for individualised attention in the teaching and learning environment.

4.5 Process elements of quality in ECE

The process elements of quality relate to the experiences of children and their families in early years settings and include the space or physical environment where learning takes place, the adult child interactions, the health and safety of children and staff, the activities that the children engage in as well as the partnerships between the professionals and the families of the children. While these elements are all equally important in provision of high quality ECE, it is important to mention that this review only focused on the curriculum, family involvement, and the physical environment in children's learning.

4.5.1 Curriculum

This vital component of process quality refers to the educational framework or learning standards put in place to ensure the same type of, or uniform level of quality for all children across different early years groups or settings. It offers guidelines or direction on the effective delivery of ECE programmes. This approach is considered problematic and has been challenged by critics who argue

that curriculum should be contextual and relevant to the needs of learners (see Brooker & Woodhead, 2010; Nsamenang, 2006; Woodhead, 1996).

Taguma et al., (2013: 7) noted that 'Curriculum or learning standards helps staff to clarify their pedagogical aims, keep progression in mind, provide a structure for the child's day, focus on the most important aspects of child development, and respond adequately to children's needs. It can also ensure continuity between ECE and primary schooling, ensuring that children are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for primary school and further learning'. Strategy 8 of the 2000 Dakar framework for action is explicit on the need for a well-defined curriculum guidelines and goals that ensure that provision for children is developmental and clearly defined in such a way that it aids children's learning and clarifies the pedagogical focus of staff in ECE particularly as it relates to meeting children's continuous development in key areas such as cognitive, social, and emotional skills. It identifies developmental milestones and measurable goals or targets to be achieved at each stage of the learning process. A curriculum guideline embodies developmentally appropriate and high quality provision for children. Taking individual differences in each learner into consideration, there is every possibility that not all children will achieve the targets or goals at the same time. According to this strategy, a clearly defined and well-designed curriculum framework is of utmost importance as it acts as a guide to practitioners in the effective delivery of children's programmes particularly in a workforce which is criticized for low certification and unqualified staff. They stressed the need for the curriculum to be consistent, the ability to adapt to local needs, the need to balance diverse expectations, to provide guidance in purpose and continuity and to improve quality.

A sensitive approach to teaching is paramount in the implementation of the curriculum and delivery of high quality in early years education. According to the 1990 Education for All initiative, The World Conference on Education for All (1990: 5) 'active and participatory approaches are particularly valuable in assuring learning acquisition and allowing learners to reach their fullest

potential'. This strategy or approach where children are in control of their learning process is recommended. The emphasis is on motivating children to be actively involved in knowledge creation or learning. A combination of child-initiated and staff-initiated contents or activities is thought to enhance cognitive learning and social outcomes for children (Siraj-Blatchford, 2010; Taguma et al., 2013). Here both children and the teacher design and initiate learning activities.

4.5.2 Family Involvement

The partnership between the family and the school is thought to be important in relation to the effective delivery and achievement of high quality ECE. (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997) developed a typology or framework of involvement which include parenting which focused on the home environment that supports achievement; communicating that involves two-way information sharing between school and home; volunteering by way of helping with planned activities in and outside the classroom; learning at home which involves parents assisting children in the learning process at home; decision making that allows parent involvement in school decisions collaborating with the community.

A number of studies explored the impact of parental or family involvement in children's learning and development. Slegers (1997) found parental involvement is beneficial for children but also for the family and the school. According to Roskos & Neuman (1993), active involvement in children's educational programmes has a relationship with improved parental attitudes, understandings, and behaviours related to how they interact with their children. In a longitudinal study with parents of disadvantaged children, Miedel & Reynolds (1999) established that greater parent participation in preschool and kindergarten activities was later associated with higher reading achievement, lower rates of grade retention, and fewer years in special education when children were in eighth grade. Thus parental or family involvement is considered a crucial element of quality in children's learning development programmes.

Involvement includes the participation of both parents and other members of the family and could take place both within and outside school settings. This promotes a strong relationship between the child's learning and development and, the family and the school. Morrison et al., (2011) noted that involvement could be in areas such as communicating and exchanging information about the child's learning process (reports of the child's progress, information about the early childhood curriculum and developmental and cultural activities in the community), or it could be in the form of supporting the child's learning process more directly at home, in the classroom, and within the community. There might also be opportunities to participate in school decision-making and leadership regarding the child's education.

4.5.3 Physical Environment

Several studies reported that well trained staff, group size, curriculum, and adult/child ratio, all impact on the quality of provision for children. In addition to that, research findings equally suggest that the physical environment where children learn is very crucial and has far reaching consequences for children's development and it is a determinant of high quality in early years learning. David & Weinstein (1987) are of the view that the environment where children learn is the main source for learning and oftentimes their attachment to objects and sometimes places in their learning environment is vital to their emotional life. Thus the quality of the physical environment in the early years learning centre is important. The physical environment includes the size of the facility, the properties of well-defined activity settings, the indoor and outdoor play spaces, the furniture, the indoor air quality and privacy. These are thought to have a relationship with children's cognitive, social and emotional development (Evans, 2006; Moore, 1987; Moore & Sugiyama, 2007). Similarly, Berris & Miller (2011: 23) identified three physical environment designs which they consider very crucial in children's learning as 'space fostering exploration, independence and development (a child's sense of self and willingness to play), spatial quality (through space, colour, light, noise and materials), and integration of the outdoors and indoors environments'

In his analysis of the role of the physical environment in children's development of cognitive and social competency, Maxwell (2007) noted that the quality of the physical environment in early years settings should promote and enable children to achieve a sense of competence. She defines competency from the environmental context, as children's ability to effectively explore their world, interact with and independently learn from their physical environment. Maxwell likens the environment to a 'third teacher'. This implies that children learn from both the environment and from people they come in contact with. She further stated that the characteristics of the physical environment that promotes competency and is responsive to children's needs is one that provides learning opportunities and allows some levels of environmental control. This speaks of children's ability to explore and to choose and freely engage with learning materials that best suit their level of challenge. The suggestion is to ensure that behavioural constraints which reduce or limit the way children's spaces are used be removed. Writing on the role of the physical environment and the need for space which fosters exploration, independence, and development, Berris & Miller (2011) noted that well designed physical space does not only create opportunity for children to effectively explore and learn through play, it equally encourages peer interaction, development of self-confidence and social skills. Curtis & Carter (2005, cited in Berris & Miller, 2011: 2,) stressed the need for 'environments with a vision for childhood [...] a time of wonder and magic when dreams and imagination get fuelled'. Sufficient spaces that ensure easy movement of equipment and furnishings, designated sections for play as well as quiet areas'. The need for interaction with toys and objects in the physical learning environment is summarized by David & Weinstein (1987, cited in Maxwell, 2007):

Physical characteristics of the environment include a variety of toys and play materials and variety in colour, shape of the space, change in floor level and/or ceiling height, textures (all nonabrasive), floor covering, amount of light, and displays in the classroom space. Too little variety in the space may lead to boredom and aimless wandering through the space. However, too much variety can be overwhelming for children, resulting in less concentrated engagement with materials and activities (p.232)

Summary

This chapter presented issues of quality in early childhood education. Various discourses noting the problematic nature of its definition were discussed. Quality indicators in children's learning was highlighted alongside different studies on the importance of the process and structural elements of quality. Taken together, the previous chapters show that given the global focus on early childhood education and the particular context of Nigeria is in need of examination in light of quality debates and discourses of early childhood education. This provides an overall rationale for this study. The next chapter will present the research methodology and design in this study.

Chapter Five

Research Methodology and Design

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology of this study. This is a qualitative study. It is interpretive in nature and it adopts the case study approach in the analysis of access and quality of provision in early childhood education in Imo State, Nigeria. To operationalise the research objectives, this study utilised primary data generated through the use of semi-structured interviews, observations of the environment, and questionnaires designed according to the research questions. Policy documents, journals, books, and official records also were secondary sources of data. The text of the interviews have been transcribed, and these transcripts have been analysed according to emergent themes from the data. This process was supported by Nvivo software. The research process was guided by the purpose of this study and the orientation or epistemological stance adopted.

The model for developing the theoretical framework of this study draws on Crotty's useful illustration (Crotty, 1998). He observed that the research process involves the choice of methods and methodology and the justification for such choices. The methodology reflects how the study is conducted. It is the systematic approach, design and procedure informing the choice of the method employed in order to achieve the goals of this study.

Thesis epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods

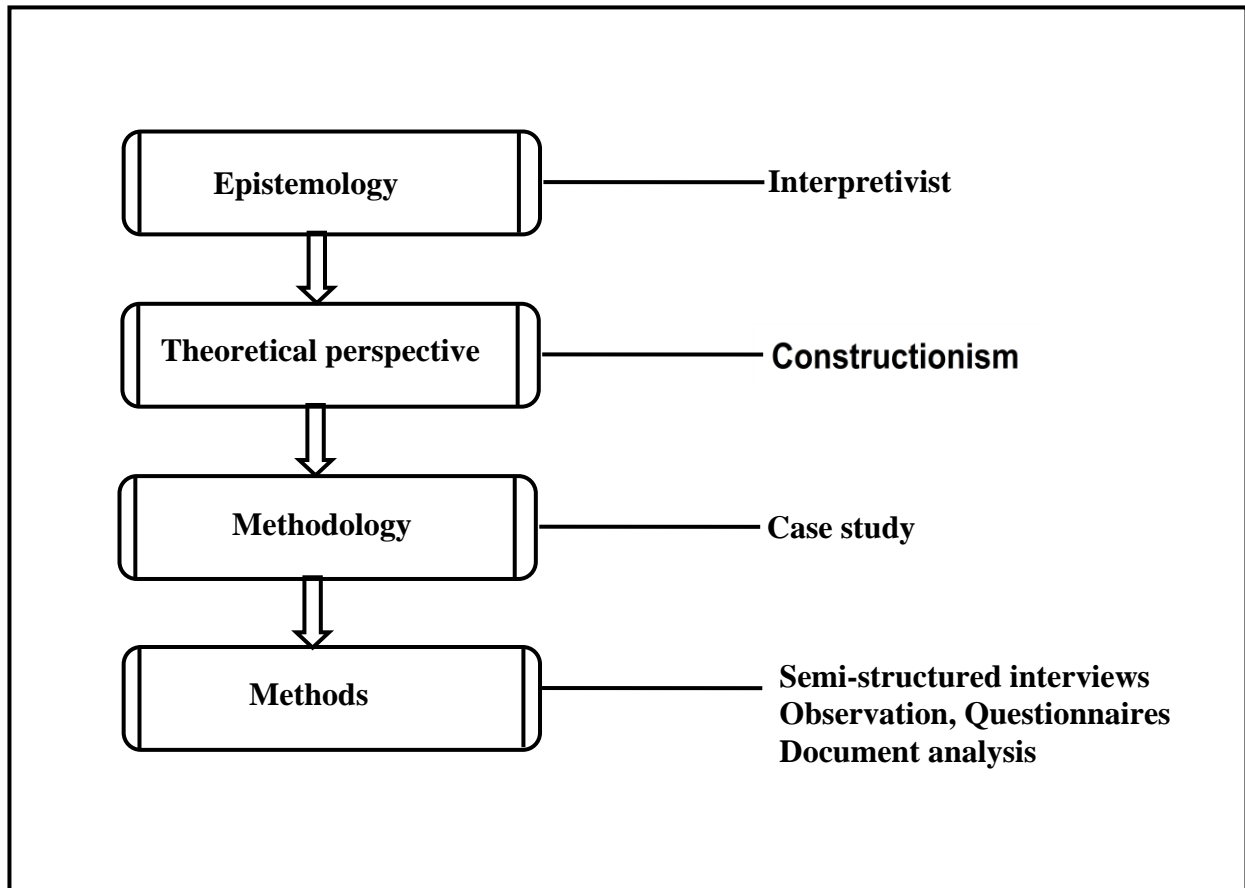


Figure 5.1 (Adopted from: Crotty, 1998)

The need to define the theoretical framework that guides data collection required to answer the research questions in a case study approach is highlighted by both Stake (2000) and Yin (2003). Yin is of the view that the process involves developing a case study protocol that reflects an overview of the study in terms of the objectives and case study issues, defining the field procedures which relate to the identification and access to sites, designing specific questions required to effectively elicit the desired responses during data collection, and then presenting, analysing and reporting the findings. Stake (1995: 17) equally suggests that the researcher delineates the main 'issues' or concerns of the case. Stake argues that 'issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and personal contexts'. Thus this study, which focused on understanding a social process based on the conceptualisations and constructions of stakeholders such as parents, practitioners and

employees of the ministries of education in relation to quality and access in the provision for children, is best approached by employing the case study methodology.

The first section in this chapter begins with the philosophical assumptions that underpin the epistemological and ontological positions taken in the research process. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this study, the research strategy and the justification for the methodological choices. In this chapter, I will state the research questions for the study, explain the methods of data collection, and provide information about the context of the study with regard to the population of study and the sampling strategies. I will also explain the method of data analysis, and the ethical considerations as well as a discussion of the credibility of the methods. A discussion of the pilot study conducted is also presented.

5.1 Positioning the research: epistemological and ontological foundations

There are philosophical assumptions, beliefs or world views about the social world. These assumptions inform the different research perspectives on how the world can be investigated. These paradigms or worldviews relate to ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions and represent the different ways of viewing and interpreting social reality (Guba & Lincoln, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This is in line with Crotty (1998) who argues that the research process can be framed into four elements comprising of epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods. Epistemological assumptions relate to the 'relationship between the inquirer and the known' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and 'how knowledge can be acquired and communicated to other human beings' (Cohen et al., 2011:6).

The epistemological orientation provides the structure to a better understanding of the research process and are lenses through which we view the world (Johnson, 2011) and account for the approach a researcher adopts in any given study. Epistemology established in Positivism or the natural sciences is based on the assumption that objectively verifiable truth exists 'out there'. Studies within this paradigm aim at measurement and quantification. In contrast, the interpretive

paradigm is qualitative in nature and presumes that reality is subjectively experienced by persons who engage in it and a researcher's interpretation of such meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In terms of orientation, I situate this research within the interpretive epistemology. This is a small scale qualitative case study which aims to explore in depth, the different perceptions or views of some stake holders in relation to access and quality of provision available to children. The decision to create understanding of the complexities of early childhood education policies in Imo state highlighted the need for my study to be contextualized and grounded in the local reality and everyday experiences of stakeholders directly involved in the education and care of the children rather than providing a hypothetical analysis. My focus is on the subjective meanings and interpretations of actors within the context of early childhood education in Owerri, Imo State. In this study, I see my role, as a researcher, as to 'understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants' (Cohen et al., 2011:15). This investigation or case study therefore relates to how reality is constructed subjectively, based on the experiences and constructions of individuals who live in it, and the interpretation of such meanings by the researcher. Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991) are of the view that an investigation is said to be interpretive if the social phenomenon is investigated in a natural setting and from the perspective of participants, the aim is to create knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon and the researchers do not impose their outsiders' knowledge of the situation on the study.

This study relates to the conditions listed by these writers because it seeks to create knowledge and understanding of early years education in Imo State particularly from the lived experiences and interpretations of parents, early years practitioners, and employees of the ministry of education who as actors or participants in their various capacities, engage in and shape ECE policies. Capturing subjective human experiences in this study required engaging with stakeholders within a natural setting and context of early years education. The study employed the inductive research design in that it began with data collection which was achieved by employing data collection techniques such

as questionnaires and semi-structured interviews that enabled participants express their views and experiences. Observation was used to corroborate various claims and capture the true picture of settings.

The exploratory nature of this investigation makes the interpretive approach well suited for generating rich and in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon being studied and as presented by various actors. These actors are individuals or groups who exercise agency (human agency) and are bound together with respect to their common interest, knowledge and experience. As a researcher employing the qualitative approach, I was directly involved in the construction of reality and my focus was on interpreting the various interpretations of early years education and care in Imo State.

Positioning this study within the interpretivist epistemology necessitates a rationale for the theoretical framework within which the analysis of access and quality in ECE in Imo State takes place. While I took into consideration the methods and methodology most appropriate for answering the research questions, the overarching rationale for this choice relates mainly to the underlying philosophical assumption about my view or perception of the world or reality. I perceive reality as meaning that is made in context, as subjective, and as (possibly) provisional.

The interpretivist philosophy is in consonance with my research goals which seeks to create insight, knowledge and understanding of social reality. The focus is on the different explanations and thick descriptions of how reality is experienced and interpreted by key stakeholders whom I consider important actors within the context of early childhood education in Imo State, Nigeria. In terms of methodology, a qualitative case study approach is considered a useful strategy for generating in-depth knowledge and exploring the issue under investigation particularly within the context of this study which is not contrived. Multiple forms of data are employed in this study. A mixed-method approach to data collection was used to examine the case in detail and from different perspectives. The research process began with data collection through the use of instruments such as semi-structured interviews and questionnaires designed to elicit responses from stakeholders as

well as the observation of facilities. This multi-method approach generated rich accounts from different perspectives on provision and practices in early years education. This approach is best suited for illuminating the complexities of early years education and for answering the research questions posed

5.2 Theoretical underpinning of this research

The theoretical stance in this study is influenced by the works of other researchers who call for a dynamic approach and discourse of 'meaning making' (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Moss & Pence, 1994) in research that addresses issues of quality in ECE. This approach was employed in the analysis and in an attempt to have an understanding of stakeholders' perspectives on the issues of quality in the provision for children in early years learning in Owerri. This 'meaning making' approach builds on the constructionist/interpretivist epistemology and is well suited for understanding holistically, human actions and behaviour (Bryman, 2001). The social constructionist perspective is concerned with people's interaction with each other in the social world based on a shared understanding or meaning of the world. It deals with lived experiences particularly from the perspective of those experiencing it (Cohen et al., 2011; Schwandt, 1994; Walsham, 1995). The constructionist approach is based on the assumption that reality is socially constructed, and the 'social process is not captured in hypothetical deductions, covariances and degrees of freedom instead understanding the social process, involves getting inside the world of those generating it' Rosen (1991, cited in Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991: 14). My focus is on understanding the personal feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and different interpretations of a social process by different stakeholders' based on their knowledge and real life experiences which cannot be numerically quantified. As discussed in the previous chapters, this study is within the context of recent government policy changes in Nigeria. The goal therefore is to understand how parents, practitioners and employees of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Owerri perceive the existing access and quality in the provision for children and if their views and experiences match the government's vision and claims of providing equal access to high quality

learning to all children as explicitly outlined in the Integrated National Policy on Early Childhood Education in Nigeria (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007).

There is limited literature and research on stakeholders' perspectives in relation to quality and access in the provision for children in early years education in Imo State which creates a gap in our understanding of the complexities of ECE reforms and policy implementation and how actors in early years education perceive government's claims of providing equal access to high quality learning for all children (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007). This study aims to fill that gap by presenting a case study on the perception of stakeholders in a group of preschools.

5.3 My role as a researcher

The research process began with the identification of the research objectives and questions ensuring that the methodological approach, methods or data collection techniques and epistemological stance in this qualitative case study was well suited for meeting the research objectives. As the principal researcher I had the responsibility of identifying, negotiating and organising visits to case study settings, documenting observations and field notes, and analysing and interpreting the data. The focus on the rich and robust constructions and interpretations of access and quality in early years education in Owerri Imo state based on the lived experiences of stakeholders, required the careful selection of methods and procedures of data collection such as semi-structured interviews, observation and questionnaires which enabled detailed a 'down to earth' examination of various perspectives (Stake, 2000) 'within its real life context' (Yin, 2009). While probing and utilising prompts at the interviews, I ensured that sensitive and personal issues were avoided and that participants were not rushed or forced to answer questions they were uncomfortable with.

I was the main data collection instrument and part of my role in this 'sense' or 'meaning making' process involved being interactive with all informants, establishing a trusting relationship with participants who had knowledge and experience of the subject matter and truthfully declaring my

intentions, the purpose of the study and the rationale for selecting them amongst the many stakeholders in ECE. The aim was to ensure that participants felt relaxed and comfortable with the exercise and that they understood what the process entailed and what my expectations were. In addition to establishing rapport, I had the ethical responsibility of protecting my informants or human participants from harm, encouraging parents to share their experiences and opinion in relation to provision for children and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in the research process.

I had the role of analysing and making my own sense of people's interpretations of the world or reality as well in the presentation of the findings from this study. It is important to highlight not just my role as a researcher but also the subjectivity of participants and my own bias that could interfere with my observations, analysis and interpretation of data. As will be more fully discussed, I went into this process with my position not just as a parent but also as a person with a professional background as an early years practitioner, and also a person with cultural values, an ethnicity, feelings and religion.

I was involved in ECE first as a parent and as a practitioner in different settings in Owerri and I had the preconceived idea that access to provision should be free and universal. Experience gathered in these different settings revealed how varied provision and experiences are for children. These experiences formed a frame of reference in my study and I consider it relevant because it provided a clearer picture of the materials required and available in settings. This meant that I was familiar with the challenges faced by practitioners and parents and I had expectations and feelings of what provision and practice should be in early years settings. I realized the need to recognise my prior knowledge of early years settings and government policies and focusing on the analysis of access and provision for children, but not to let it bias my interpretations in the research process.

5.4 Research questions

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following research questions were explored

1. What perception do stake holders in Imo State have of the 2007 Government Policy on Early Childhood Education and Care in Nigeria in relation to
 - i. Process and structure as dimensions of quality
 - ii. Affordability of Early Childhood Education and Care
- 2 How do these perceptions match government policies?

The above questions were fundamental for elucidating stakeholders' perceptions of ECE in Owerri Imo state, their perceived obstacles to access, their ideas about quality control mechanisms, cost, funding, and the current state of provision in settings. In this study, I will ask questions and interpret participants' responses with regard to the process and structure elements of quality such as staff training and development, remuneration, adult/child ratios, class size, classroom materials, environment, curriculum, management structure, children's experiences and family involvement in education.

5.5 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted between the months of January and February 2013 with some stake holders in early childhood education in Owerri metropolis and Uratta, a sub-urban area within Owerri local government area of Imo State. The pilot was intended to assess the adequacy of the research instruments (interviews, observation and questionnaires), testing questions to determine if they will generate the required information to meet these research aims. It was also to determine the data management and analysis techniques for instance the use of tape recorders, transcribers and the use of Nvivo to support my analysis. Following several visits to the settings, I secured access and arranged interview dates with participants in four early years settings. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, participants were given the consent forms and information/invitation letters

inviting them to participate in the study. Interviews were audio taped and all participants were informed about the use of the recording device and the reasons for using it in the study. All participants agreed to participate.

5.5.1 Pilot study site

One private and three government funded early years settings were purposively selected from Owerri Local Government Area of Imo State. Three of the settings are located within residential and working class neighbourhood within Owerri, the state capital, while the fourth setting is located in a rural area. With the 2007 National Policy on Early Childhood Education, all government funded settings compulsorily offered half day care and learning for children between 3-5 years only. In schools that run both morning and afternoon sessions, all children were catered for. The private setting offered full day care for children under one year to 5 years.

5.5.2 Pilot sample group

The sample group comprised eleven (11) participants: four teachers, five parents and two employees of the state MOE. Following the criteria set, only parents with children between birth-five years in the sampled settings were eligible to participate. The teachers that were selected had taught for a minimum of six months. Apart from the private setting where contact was established directly with the head teacher, access to parents and teachers in government settings was through the head teachers who arranged for teachers in their nursery sections and recommended parents. Participation was voluntary and all participants signed the consent forms.

5.5.3 Methods of data collection for the pilot study

The instruments for data collection in the pilot study are semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Two questionnaires were distributed to staff of the MOE while seven participants were interviewed (See Appendix for interview guide and questionnaire). A brief introduction explaining the purpose of the study as well as the interview was carried out at the beginning of each session. These research methods were considered most appropriate for eliciting responses from the

participants. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the participants, for instance, six of the interviews took place in each case study setting during official school hours while one parent invited me to a church premises (her place of worship). This choice created an opportunity for participants to relax and for clarification of issues and concepts.

5.5.4 Lessons learnt from the pilot study that influenced the main study

As mentioned earlier, the pilot was intended to assess the adequacy of the research instruments, data management tools, testing questions to determine if they will generate the required information to meet these research aims. The pilot revealed several areas for further reflection for instance:

- Sufficient time is required to make approaches. Cultivating the sort of friendship that would make participants confident enough to build trust and discuss their lived experiences takes time.
- There is a need to address or prevent coercion. For example, there was an element of coercion in one of the settings when a nursery teacher that had no prior knowledge of my study or visit was asked by the head teacher to stand in for a colleague who was unavoidably absent for our scheduled interview. This may have accounted for the teacher being quiet and inaudible at the beginning of our discussion. As a researcher, I must ensure that all participants have full information about the research and are happy to participate. Interviewing participants based on schools' or teachers' recommendations raises the issue of trustworthiness. The reason is that parents may respond based on expectations of settings or teachers rather than their actual experiences and encounters. To enhance the credibility of the main study, arrangements of this nature should be minimized.
- Beyond interviewing participants, accessing classrooms, observing and validating some of the claims made about infrastructures and facilities in settings was absolutely necessary.

- The pilot study highlighted the need to clarify some concepts, terms and questions put across to participants. Some questions worked well because they were concise and unambiguous so they generated sufficient information and knowledge while some failed to yield the required information because the questions were either vague and lengthy or were abstract concepts that parents and teachers sought clarification on.
- The pilot study offered the opportunity for me to further reflect on some of my expectations and question some of my assumptions about my participants for instance my assumption that parents and teachers alike were knowledgeable or well informed about existing early childhood education policies and would readily discuss and relate their experience to the promises in the policy.

In the pilot study I observed that both parents and teachers had no knowledge of the 2007 national curriculum and policies in early childhood education so they had no information to offer on that theme. Two teachers in government settings admitted they had not seen or heard of the new framework and had not gone on any form of training in early years education and care, and therefore were not in a position to implement or discuss what they had not seen. They were of the view that children in their settings were taught what the teachers perceived to be beneficial. This proved problematic as some questions had to be rephrased and repeated for better understanding. Following the findings and experiences from the pilot study the interview schedule was revised to enhance clarity and was administered to participants in the main study. Some of the questions were rephrased while some were dropped completely.

5.6 Research methodology

I have used a case study approach for this research, as I considered it to be the most appropriate strategy for exploring the national policy on early childhood education and care in Nigeria. The rationale for employing this methodology is discussed in section 5.9.3 of this chapter. Yin

(2009:18) defines a case study as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'. It offers insight into research questions based on the perspectives of people within real time and real space thereby creating better understanding of ideas. Yin in (Cohen et al., 2011).

Relating this view to the current study, I considered a case study to be best suited for creating in-depth knowledge and holistic understanding of how ECE operates. It is appropriate for analysing the conceptualization of access and quality by the stakeholders within the case. As mentioned earlier, the choice of building the study on stakeholders' perspectives is because of their potential to have a role in shaping ECE policies and provision of care and education for children. This study therefore highlights how this reality is experienced, constructed, and interpreted by different actors and the researcher's interpretation of their various interpretations. The focus is on the insider's point of view and understanding of access and quality of provision for children based primarily on their lived experiences. It is an effective strategy to employ when there is no manipulation or control of the behaviour of participants, and when the interest in the study is to answer questions of 'how' and 'why' (Yin, 2009). This makes the case study strategy best suited for understanding 'how' ECE in Owerri operates, and 'why' the system functions the way it does, drawing on the opinions of parents, teachers, and government employees with regard to existing provision in terms of accessibility, funding, cost, and quality. This strategy seeks to engage with and report the complexities of social activities in order to represent the meaning that individual social actors bring to those settings (as suggested by Stark & Torrance, 2005).

To effectively analyse this phenomenon, I embarked on the case study of selected preschools in Owerri during which three months was spent interacting with people and collecting data. Acknowledging the pitfalls in a single method of data collection, I also used a mixed method approach hence primary data was generated through semi-structured interviews conducted with

selected parents and early years practitioners in nine government funded and private pre-schools within Owerri metropolis and Owerri north (semi-urban area) in Imo state. I equally observed the settings by visiting schools and taking note of the environment. Questionnaires were used to elicit responses from some staff of the inspectorate units of the State Ministry of Education in Owerri.

The questionnaires and interview guides covered themes on structural and process dimensions of quality such as staff training and development, remuneration, child–teacher ratio, class size, classroom materials and curriculum, management structure, environment, children’s experiences and partnerships with families. Facilities in the case study settings were observed and secondary sources of data from government policy documents and existing literature on the issue under review were used to corroborate information that emanated from the primary data. For effective management of data, I made use of field notes and data was also via an audio recording device for the interviews while an I-pad was used to take photographs of facilities and materials in settings. These instruments put together were designed to generate detailed information from different perspectives. The ability to utilize different data collection techniques is considered to be one of the strengths of case study methodology (Yin, 2009).

5.6.1 Limitations of case study methodology

While case study is thought to be meaningful with regard to a method of inquiry, it is not without criticism. Yin (2003) acknowledges that some of the criticisms are that they are time and labour intensive, they can be thought of as lacking rigour, leading to unreadable documents findings that are not generaliazable. The volume of data in case studies can be attributed to the various sources of data and data collection techniques at the disposal of the researcher. Thomas (2011b) refutes the assertion on the length of time. He argues that critiques sometimes confuse case study with ethnography and participant-observation. These are data collection techniques which actually take time to complete, require much field work and involve a great deal of documentation.

Another concern about case study methodology is the non-generalizability of its findings. Responses to this critique are that since case study is about one thing or 'the particular', it is not possible to make generalizations beyond the immediate study or based on 'one person's experience or a single uncorroborated observation (Gomm et al., 2000; Yin, 2009; Thomas, 2011a). Punch (2005:144) argues that case studies aim to 'preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of a case'. The focus of a case study is on the richness and depth of evidence or information on the phenomenon being investigated (Geertz, 1973; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Thomas, 2011a.). The aim of this study is not to generate generalizable knowledge. Rather my focus is on creating in-depth knowledge and understanding of how stakeholders perceive the issues of access and quality of provision available to children and also to establish if their perception is at variance or in agreement with government's claim of providing equal access to high quality education and care.

5.6.2 Rationale for the use of case study for this inquiry

The criticisms of this approach do not exclude its application in the analysis of access and quality in ECE. Some of the rationales for choosing a case study approach can be found in the arguments put forward by researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Robson, 2011; Yin, 2009). These arguments suggest that factors such as the nature or purpose of the research, the research questions, the extent of control over actual behavioural events, and the focus on contemporary issues as opposed to histories inform the choice of a research strategy.

The type of questions addressed in the current study informed my choice of case study as a research strategy. Yin (2009) is of the view that case studies are the preferred strategy when how and why questions are posed. This study investigates how provision is accessed and funded, why children and families do or do not have access to early childhood education, and issues related to quality, cost and the affordability of provisions. The study also seeks to examine if the perceptions of stakeholders match or are at variance with government policy claims. This is a study that seeks to create insight into a complex social process which quantitative strategies may not easily reveal.

Questions of this nature aim to capture human opinion, values, behaviours and explanations which cannot be measured by statistical tools or approaches.

Eliciting responses to these questions requires interacting with stakeholders in their natural settings, analysing previous and current policies, past and present personal experiences, observing existing provision as well as examining past and present records in setting. Therefore, I determined that the most appropriate method for an investigation of this nature would be a case study. This research strategy would reveal the complex process of providing education and care for children and enrich our understanding of the phenomenon being studied. It is a valuable tool for analysing the explicit and implicit meanings of the national framework for early years education in Nigeria.

Case study is the preferred strategy when the focus is on contemporary issues and when there is little control from the researcher over events (Yin, 2009). Relating this to the current study, ECE is a present-day or contemporary phenomenon, taking place in bounded systems like institutions and centres for early childhood education and within real-life contexts. For a better understanding of this complex system in terms of the process, structure, and occurring changes, a case study strategy is considered appropriate.

The interpretive nature of this study made it appropriate to apply the case study strategy. An interpretivist philosophy is built on the tenet that reality does not exist in an objective and observable form, but rather it is experienced subjectively through meanings and interpretations people give to it. Accordingly, interpretivist philosophy is in consonance with my research goals which aim to create knowledge and understanding of a social reality from the point of view of persons who live in it. To reiterate, this study explores government policies in early childhood education and care (ECE) in Nigeria. It seeks a holistic understanding of how early years education in Imo state operates. Knowledge and understanding of this social phenomenon may not be fully explored without drawing on the views and lived experiences of parents, early years practitioners and employees of the ministry of education who are directly involved in the delivery of education

and care for children. A case study method is well suited to the discovery of meanings and would be very effective for illuminating diverse viewpoints, real life experiences, values, expectations, interests and existing challenges.

5.6.3 Research population

Imo state the setting of this study has three senatorial districts or geographical zones namely Owerri, Orlu, and Okigwe. To ensure feasibility, parents, teachers, and employees of the Ministry of Education were selected from the population of stakeholders in the Owerri local government area. Nine (9) early years settings were purposively selected from government funded and private owned settings within the Owerri municipal in the state capital and Owerri North (a sub-urban area) in Imo state. Like most urban areas, it is experiencing increase in population as well as demand for Early Childhood Education and other social amenities. The major consideration for selecting this geographical location is its high concentration of private and government funded early years settings. In selecting the case study settings, the researcher took into consideration, centres that admit children between the ages of birth-five years in crèches, nurseries, and kindergartens. Invitation letters were distributed to parents and teachers and staff of the Ministry of Education. Only those who indicated interest participated in the study.

5.6.4 Fieldwork preparation and logistics

With the approval of the research ethics board of the University of Roehampton and my supervisory team, the fieldwork exercise commenced. Arrangement for transport that enabled me coordinate movement from one case study site to the other was in place for instance a vehicle and a driver was assigned for the duration of the fieldwork. Having identified potential case study settings within close proximity, I began visiting and negotiating access with head teachers of various settings. Access was denied in a number of settings particularly those who were suspicious of my motives and procedure (even after detailed explanations of the research process) and those who felt uncomfortable discussing ECE policies which they claimed they had no knowledge of.

Nevertheless, three private and six government funded early years settings that indicated interest were enlisted in this study.

5.6.5 Selection and gaining access to settings

5.6.6 Recruitment of Participants

During the pilot study, access to government funded settings was negotiated directly with various head teachers without reference to the Ministry of Education or the Local Government Authority. I explored doing the same during the fieldwork for the main study but the bureaucratic protocol in place did not permit the previous pattern or arrangement. Early years practitioners in government schools were willing to participate in the study, however, their insistence on official written permission (granting access to schools) meant I had to visit two Local Government Councils (Owerri municipal council and Owerri North) to meet with the Education Secretaries (ESs) in charge of schools, as well as the officers or inspectors in charge of ECE settings in these areas. Consequently approval from the education authorities which took the form of phone calls and an official letter to head teachers was secured and it eased access to government settings. Access to private settings was negotiated directly with proprietors.

Retrospectively, the approval was very influential in my gaining access and the co-operation of head teachers but not necessarily influential in gaining the consent of individuals thus confirming the views of Hammersley & Atkinson (2007: 86) who noted that 'access is not simply a matter of physical presence or absence. It is far more than the granting or withholding of permission for research to be conducted'. I was able to recruit a total of 47 participants (see table 5.1 below). This confirms the views of Miller & Bell (2002) who noted that the decision or choice to be involved in any study, rests completely on the participant. Even when due process was followed by securing the permission of the Education Secretaries and their supervisors, it was entirely down to parents and early years practitioners to decide whether to participate or not.

Number of Participants Recruited in Each Setting

Type of Setting	Names of Settings	Number of Parents	Number of Teachers
Government	TWP	5	3
Private	SS	3	1
Government	MSP	4	1
Private	BO	2	3
Government	ORJ	-	3
Government	Urat	2	4
Government	Uzi	3	2
Private	Olu	-	3
Government	Mod	2	2
Total =	9	21	22

Table 5.1

Note: The above figure does not include the four participants from the MOE

As evident in table 5.1, only one teacher (head of nursery section) and four parents were willing to be part of the study in *MSP* setting while three teachers and one parent granted interviews in *OLU* setting. Under the circumstances I found in the field, I did the best I could to ensure broad coverage in terms of the number of participants by increasing the case study settings to nine. This choice represents urban and semi urban samples for instance, seven of the case study schools were located within residential and working class neighbourhoods within the state capital which is noted for its high concentration of people, schools, private businesses, and government establishments while two settings are located in a semi urban area. The aim was to gain a wider impression of key actors or stakeholders perspectives and also to establish if administrative procedures in different areas had an effect on the implementation of early years policies and programmes.

5.6.7 Selection of sample and criteria for selection

Employing purposive sampling strategy (non-probability sample technique) where sampling is conducted in a 'deliberate way, with some purpose or focus in mind' Punch (2013:161) helped to ensure that participants were well suited for illuminating the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose was to recruit participants who by virtue of their positions as parents or association with the

implementation of early childhood policies in their capacity as practitioners and policy makers, are knowledgeable about the subject matter or phenomenon being investigated, and fall within the other criteria mapped out (see the next section).

The initial plan to recruit thirty (30) participants comprising 2 employees of the Ministry of Education, 16 teachers and 12 parents drawn from four case study settings in both urban and semi urban areas in Owerri Zone was altered during the fieldwork because I was unable to find 28 parents and teachers who were willing and at the same time knowledgeable about the topic in just four schools as proposed. A total of twelve settings were approached for the study, three declined while nine granted access. The number of case study settings is nine for two reasons. First the settings were relatively small in size and this had implications in terms of staff strength. A pattern in all government settings visited is one teacher to a class with no attendants or support staff irrespective of the number of children (many teachers had between 30-37 children). A private setting with about sixty or more children had only four teachers including the proprietor. Second was the difficulty of recruiting enough willing participants in each setting.

There were cases of outright refusal from both parents and teachers for instance the head teachers of the two settings which recorded no parent participation claimed the parents were invited but they declined. Regrettably, I had no way of verifying that information as a result of time constraints and the gatekeepers in the settings. Therefore, I saw the need to increase the number of case study settings in order to gain a suitable sample. As a consequence, 47 participants which comprises of 21 parents, 22 teachers drawn from three private and six government funded settings and 4 employees of the State Ministry of Education were purposively selected for the study. This choice represents urban and semi urban samples for instance, seven of the case study schools are located within residential and working class neighbourhoods within the state capital which is noted for its high concentration of people, schools, private businesses, and government establishments while two settings are located in a semi-urban areas.

Expediency is the reason for this sample size. This relates to ease of access to case study settings in terms of transportation and willingness of settings and participants to be part of the study. In other words, I could only access centres and participants that grant permission. Other factors taken into consideration include safety issues, funds, and time at my disposal. The security report in some areas in Imo state for example heightened tension and fear of kidnapping meant I could not stay longer than necessary in the field or venture outside the areas I covered and felt relatively safe in. Again this study was not funded by any agency or government.

5.6.8 The criteria for selection

In selecting the teachers for this study, I took their length of service, experience in early years education, and educational qualification into consideration. The teachers in this study had qualifications ranging from NCE (Nigerian Certificate in Education) to first degree and had taught for periods ranging from 6 months to 20 years or more. Some had undergone training in early childhood education and had been involved in teaching children in early childhood education. All parents who showed willingness to participate and who had children in early years education in the case study settings were selected. Members of staff of the Ministry of Education who were included were from the inspectorate unit and had been involved in the supervision and monitoring of early years settings. Private and government funded settings in this study were all within the same geographical area Owerri education zone. Schools within the state capital are multicultural and used English language as the medium of instruction however, my understanding and ability to speak Ibo language fluently worked to my advantage particularly when I came face-to-face with two participants who preferred to grant interviews in Ibo language.

5.6.9 Individual parents in the study

To enhance the credibility of this study I avoided working with parents singled out or recommended by teachers knowing that these group of persons could be less critical of the schools or would respond based on expectations of settings rather than their actual experiences and encounters. This

approach was based on the practical knowledge gained during the pilot study conducted between January and February 2013. However, I relied on the support of the schools to introduce and identify individual parents that fit into the criteria stated above. With the permission of all but two settings (a private and government setting), information sheets about the research project were personally distributed to parents. The agreement reached with each school was to catch up with parents as they dropped their children off at school in the morning or as they picked them up at the end of the day. I secured interviews and we mutually agreed on meeting places, days and times.

5.6.10 Sourcing for materials for this study

Locating relevant literature for this study began with my e-mailing researchers such as Alan Pence and Bame Nsamenang for materials relating to ECE in global contexts and also within the particular context of Sub-Saharan Africa. These authors responded positively by sending materials and directing me to links which were very useful. In Nigerian government publications relating to government programmes and policies in education information about socio-economic, cultural and political issues within the Nigerian context was obtained.

5.7 Method of data collection

One of the strengths of the case study is the ability to gather and utilize information and data from different sources. A number of researchers (for example, Altrichter, 2008; Burns 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Golafshani 2003) are of the view that multiple sources of data allow for triangulation (as a multimethod approach) which produces rich, detailed and balanced picture of situations and human behaviour as a result of exploring it from diverse perspectives. Evidence from this approach improves the quality of the study in terms of credibility.

In the present study methodological triangulation is employed. This involved the use of instruments such as semi-structured interviews with teachers, proprietors and parents of children in the case study settings, and questionnaires which elicited responses from employees of the state ministry of education and the observation of facilities in each of the settings. I consider these instruments very

valuable primary sources of data for studying the phenomenon under investigation. The specific application of these instruments is presented in the section below.

5.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are highly efficient for generating rich, empirical data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Albeit this method is fraught with some limitations. For example, Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007: 28) noted that ‘the challenge of interview data is best mitigated by data collection approaches that limit bias. A key approach, is using numerous and highly knowledgeable informants who view the focal phenomena from diverse perspectives’. This study relied on semi-structured interviews which were used to elicit responses and gain insight into the unique experiences and constructions of reality by key stake holders such as parents and early years practitioners directly involved in the education and care of children. This presupposes that they have some level of knowledge of the issues under review (Schutt, 2006)

The process involved face to face interviews with 22 teachers and 21 parents which were tape recorded with an audio tape recorder with inbuilt microphones. This enabled the researcher to capture the entire discussion and it became the major source of transcripts. It equally involved the use of open-ended type of questions and the same sets of clearly structured questions aimed at extracting information on the nature of access and quality of provision for children (Cohen et al., 2007). The quiet environment in some settings, use of probes or prompts and follow-up questions created the opportunity for interviewees to freely express or expound their views, personal experiences and clarify underlying issues.

While effort was made to secure quiet and conducive interview rooms, the state of affairs in some of the case study settings (in terms of space) meant interference and sometimes a noisy background during interview sessions. For instance, in one of the government settings where I requested access to a quiet room or library, the teacher told me that was not possible. The makeshift library she said, would have been ideal but the only staff assigned to that room would have nowhere to go while the

interview was going on. Allowing her to sit in an interview session would have been ethically problematic in the sense that it may have breached my commitment to privacy and confidentiality. We ended up conducting the interview session in a corner of her class while she waited for parents to pick up their children. On different occasions and in different schools, interviews had to be paused as a result of interruptions. This issue of space was common in all government settings in this study. Interview guides covered various themes and was drawn based on the research questions and objectives (See the attached interview guide in the appendix). Participants were informed about the purpose of conducting the study and the interviews and were equally reassured of confidentiality in the whole process. This was necessary to win their trust.

5.7.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires which were personally distributed and collected were used to elicit responses from four (4) employees of the inspectorate units of the state ministry of education. The questionnaires in this study consisted of two sections. The first part elicited demographic information and the second part which contains 24 statements from which respondents indicate their level of agreement or disagreement (See the attached questionnaires). The 24 items were designed to explore stakeholders' views on themes such as the curriculum, learning environment, facilities in early years settings; access and quality of provision; monitoring and supervision as well as teacher development. These four participants declined the request to grant interviews because they did not want their contribution to the study recorded because of the sensitivity of their job.

5.7.3 Observation

In addition to questionnaires and interviews, facilities were observed and documented following my field notes. This guided my interpretations, provided firsthand information and a basis for confirming claims and assertions made by interviewees. Field notes provided detailed information about the study and gave insight into the real state of facilities and situation on ground for instance, the learning environment, indoor and outdoor facilities, class size, teacher/pupil ratio and learning

resources. However in employing this method, I took into consideration the fact that it is time consuming, there was also the issue of selectivity or choosing only some and not all what should be observed because broad coverage is difficult to achieve without a team of observers and events may proceed differently because it is being observed (Yin, 2009:102).

During the pilot study which took place between January and February 2013, it was observed that the structure of most settings did not permit access to classrooms and there was no way of observing and validating some of the claims made by the interviewees. This raises the issues of trustworthiness of the participants in this study (Guba, 1981). Limitations of this nature were addressed through combining interviews and observations. This minimized the chances of relying solely on participants whose opinion, attitudes and perspectives contribute to a degree of bias.

Responses from semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents in which they were asked predetermined questions were inputted into the computer and then transcribed word for word using transcription kit. Transcripts were coded and analysed according to emerging patterns or recurrent themes. Coding in this instance involved identifying experiences, ideas, and perspectives of the different stakeholders in relation to the research questions and assigning the same descriptive codes to similar responses. Data analysis was supported by Nvivo software which established patterns and coding in the data.

5.7.4 Ethical considerations

I am aware of the ethical requirements for conducting research which are based on issues of respecting human participants, particularly with regard to confidentiality, informed consent and accurate reporting. In accordance with ethical conduct in the research process, approval for this study was sought and obtained from the University of Roehampton Ethics Committee (See Appendix for ethical clearance). Access to private settings was negotiated directly with proprietors who were willing to recount their experiences in ECE.

Written information and consent forms (See Appendix) were distributed early enough and sufficient time was allowed between the distribution of the information sheets and the commencement of the interviews. The aim was to enable willing participants indicate interest without feeling pressured. Participants were formally written and invited to participate voluntarily in the study with letters or information forms detailing the title and purpose of the study; the rights and role of participants and my expectations as a researcher. It equally pledged my commitment to confidentiality, the protection of the identity of participants, protection from harm with a firm promise that information generated would be strictly for the purpose of research. All participants were informed about their right to withdraw if they felt threatened, pressured, or unwilling to continue, without harm or cost. They were equally reassured of not being mere informants or sources of information, rather their accounts and perceptions would be presented and findings from the study would be made available to them. Data collected was electronically saved and kept secured with password which was only accessed by the researcher or members of the supervisory team.

Becoming familiar with prospective participants was vital to the success of my data collection. In this regard I focused on creating a friendly or non-hostile environment as suggested by Karnieli-Miller et al., (2009: 280). They noted that this 'feeling of intimacy is fuelled by the unstructured, informal, anti-authoritative, and non-hierarchical atmosphere in which the qualitative researcher and participants establish their relations in an atmosphere of power equality' (2009: 280). Hence prior to the commencement of the interviews, I visited several of the case study settings. It was an opportunity for negotiating access, getting acquainted with and establishing rapport built on trust and mutual respect. I felt the need to de-emphasize my educational qualifications, and any other attribute that would have created a feeling of inferiority on the part of my participants. I realized that the relationship required was not that of an 'expert or critic' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) of what settings in my study did or did not do right as that was not my objective. It was a relationship built on mutual trust, friendship and equal partnership with people who share the same vision and pursue the same goal of providing education and care for children. This approach yielded

positive result because most of the participants became relaxed. I felt at ease particularly on different occasions when some teachers referred to me as 'onyeawuonyenkeanyi' meaning this one is one of us.

In spite of the friendship that developed, I sensed an aura of discomfort around some participants who had reservations about the recording devices, and once more I faced the challenge of proving my sincerity of purpose and explaining why I wanted to record interviews or take photographs of some of the settings. For instance some participants requested to know why they were required to sign and print their names on the consent forms if they were truly anonymous. Realizing that the onus of winning the consent and confidence of participants whose roles was paramount to the success of the study was on me as a researcher, I became completely open and fully explained my professional background and its relationship to my study as well as the purpose and procedure of the research. Participants were reassured that the study was strictly for the purpose of research and only members of the research team were allowed access to the information provided. They were duly informed about their anonymity and right to withdraw at anytime if they so wished or felt pressured. Pseudonyms were used to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of both participants and case study setting. Albeit photographs of settings and facilities are included in the thesis, I have excluded all visual materials identifying people.

My choice of epistemological and methodological approach highlighted the issues of my subjectivity and that of my participants which I perceive to be a part of this research process. Olesen (2012: 2) describes subjectivity 'as an embodied experience of social interaction which has conscious as well as unconscious levels. Subjectivity is not seen as an individual attribute but as a relational and dynamic aspect of the social interaction'. Producing credible and valid findings in this study required being aware of and dealing with my personal prejudices, doubts, religious background, cultural values, perception and desires that would come into play. Olesen (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) observed that the researcher has attributes, characteristics, a history, gender, class,

race and social attributes that enter the research. Supporting this view, Lincoln in (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) argue that we are not just a single person, but rather multitude of possibilities. These multiple self or position come into play in the research process and leads to the questioning of the objectivity, validity reliability as well as the nature of the text and the voices in it. This suggests that unavoidably, I am part of this qualitative research and I am inherently biased.

The concept of reflexivity which suggests that as a researcher, I must monitor my roles, position, reactions, and biases in the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Also to be considered is the subjectivity of my research participants. Cohen et al., (2000) noted that the subjectivity of respondents, their opinions, attitudes and perspectives together contribute to a degree of bias. Minimizing bias and maintaining credibility in this study required identifying my roles and position in the research process, focusing on and obtaining credible information and embarking on careful selection and interpretation of data.

5.7.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is 'the activity of making sense of, interpreting, or theorizing data. It is both art and science...If data speak for themselves, analysis would not be necessary' Schwandt (2001: 6). The analysis in this study is grounded in the data generated. The instruments employed in the process of data collection helped me to make meaning of the realities from different perspectives as experienced by some stakeholders in ECE in Owerri. The aim of my analysis was to assemble the different meanings and interpretations vital to the holistic understanding of the issues of access and quality of provision for children and to reconstruct the various descriptions of the stakeholders.

Listening and transcribing the tape recorded interviews (verbatim) was the starting point for this data analysis. During this process, I began conceptualizing my data. This meaning making process began with my thoroughly exploring and reading through the manuscripts, carefully identifying and labelling relevant phrases, sentences, opinions, and patterns and establishing concepts that relate to the research questions (during a process of coding). By selecting and bringing relevant codes

together, categories or themes were then created or labelled. The aim was to establish the connections between them. Common or similar phrases and differences were then identified and analysed to create knowledge about the world particularly from the perspective of the stakeholders in this study.

5.7.6 Credibility of this study

This study aims to examine the opinions, values and behaviours of stakeholders, which are inevitably value-laden. I ensured that field notes were accurately recorded. Interview questions covered various themes and addressed the research questions. Interview responses were adequately taped, accurately transcribed in the precise words used by respondents and analysed alongside the questionnaires. This is in line with Yin (2009) who recommends that investigators should document procedures followed in the case study as poorly documented procedures could raise doubts about the reliability of the study.

5.7.7 The Influence of my human self in my research

As a researcher employing the qualitative approach I was directly involved in the construction of reality and my choice of epistemological and methodological approach highlighted the issues of my subjectivity and that of the participants which I perceive to be integral part of the research process. As Sword (1999: 270) suggests, 'reflection on the influence of self not only creates personal awareness of how the research is shaped by one's own biography but also provides a context within which audiences can more fully understand the researcher's interpretation of text data'. Other researchers have also acknowledged the importance of the researcher in the research (see Dupuis, 1999; Gomm et al., 2000; Hubbard et al., 2001; Olesen, 2012).

The implication of my stance is that I cannot lay claim to a study that is value free or devoid of my personal experiences, attributes or underlying values (see Hammersley, 2000) or even that of my participants. Peshkin (1988) observed that as researchers, we enter the field with two types of 'self' namely the human self which is typified by the totality of who we are as individuals in our day by

day circumstances and the research self that we bring to bear in our particular research situations. He argues that these are constant elements of any research and 'is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and non-research aspects of our life' and they 'have the capacity to filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement' (Peshkin, 1988: 18). To Olesen (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), this self is characterized by our history, gender, class, race and social attributes that influence a research. This is consistent with (Dupuis, 1999) who noted that the human self and experiences colour the choices researchers make in terms of what to study, the specific areas to focus on in research, the questions to ask, and issues related to research design.

I acknowledge my 'multitude of possibilities' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 226) and the fact that I went into this study with my human self and biases based on my professional background, personal experiences, gender, cultural values and ethnicity all of which are inextricably linked to who I am as an individual. Thus my interest and greatest influence on what to study and choice of topic relates to my involvement first as a parent whose children participated in and experienced the provision or children in ECE in Owerri, second, my professional background as a teacher, and third my role as researcher seeking to make contribution to knowledge.

These experiences consciously influenced the decision to explore the issues of access and quality of learning in ECE through the lenses of a group of people within a given space, time and culture (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). As a teacher I taught in primary and secondary levels of education and later as a practitioner in different early years settings in Owerri, Nigeria and later in England. Teaching in different settings revealed how varied provision and experiences are for children. It also presented the opportunity of experiencing first hand, wide disparities between settings, unequal access to provisions and the limitations children and families face as a result of poverty and high cost of education.

Drawing on my awareness as a student and researcher with a determination to specialize in ECE, a quest for better understanding truth and desire to contribute to knowledge, I focused on thoroughly exploring, understanding and representing the views and lived experiences of parents and practitioners who have little or no say in ECE policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria. I was aware of the gap in the government's statement of intention and the actual provision for children, but wanted to gain an understanding of how this might be perceived by stakeholders. These past experiences formed a frame of reference in my study and I consider it relevant because it provided a clearer picture of the materials required and available in settings. This meant that I was familiar with the challenges faced by practitioners and parents, and I had expectations and feelings of what provision and practice ought to be in early years settings and I equally had my biases and the preconceived notion that access to provision should be free and universal.

The decision to utilize semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and observation was influenced by my ontological and epistemological stance and belief that a thorough and most effective way of understanding, constructing and interpreting stakeholders' perspectives is through immersing myself in the lived world of my participants. This meaning making process is 'an active process that requires scrutiny, reflection, and interrogation of the data, the researcher, the participants, and the context that they inhabit' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004:274). My research approach and data collection techniques were particularly informative in that it brought the experiences of parents, children and teachers closer to me than I would have read from the pages of mainstream texts. Interacting with participants and observing facilities in real life settings revealed the actual state of the learning environment and the quality of provision and care available to some children.

My gender undoubtedly played a role in the process of this fieldwork. As a female researcher exploring ECE in Nigeria which is known for a workforce that is disproportionately led by women, I found it easy accessing and communicating with predominantly female participants who did not perceive me as threatening particularly after I proved my sincerity of purpose. I was able to relate

with their experiences as mothers and female teachers. Similarly, my ethnicity, cultural, religious and linguistic background with my participants mattered and worked in my favour because it enabled us communicate effectively and identify with each other throughout the study. For instance, my linguistic skill was particularly handy during my encounter with two participants who chose to grant their interviews in Ibo language. Sharing the same religious belief (Christianity) and cultural background (Ibo) with my participants had impact on the way I was perceived and consequently on the depth of information I gathered during the fieldwork. My cultural identity as an Ibo woman contributed to my gaining trust within these setting than I may have done if I had conducted this study outside that environment. There was this air of "kparakpo" (a Nigerian slang which denotes unity or oneness) displayed and voiced especially when they realized I had lived for more than twenty four years in Owerri Imo state even though I am a Deltan (Delta is a state in Nigeria). At different times some teachers referred to me as and indicated to their colleagues that I was "onyenkeanyi" and "Nwaafor" meaning 'she is one of us'.

There were emotional moments in the course of interviewing my participants. This is consistent with (Hubbard et al., 2001) who noted that emotions are inescapable because how we make sense of the world and our interactions with others are an emotional relation. During my interview in a government funded setting, I found myself struggling to hold back tears after a lady who lost her husband broke down in tears as she narrated her experience of struggling to survive and educate her seven children and her perception of existing provision for children. Forced to pause for a while, I began to console and encourage her. When the interview commenced again after she put herself together, she acknowledged that children in the setting lacked basic facilities nevertheless the interviewee was quite grateful for the little provided and she praised the government in power for making life a bit easy as she struggled to bring up her children. As a widow with no one to assist, it would have been impossible to afford the tuition fee of about four thousand naira per term the equivalent of about (£15 or 25 US dollars). In another incident, I listened as a proprietor (a friend of mine) told her story. She broke down in tears as she described the 'shock' and pain she has lived

with since her mother passed away. I suppressed the strong urge to cry. Unquestionably, I was upset because I knew the pain she was describing. Quite recently I had been in that same position having lost and buried my mother the year before. We shared similar feelings and experiences of loss.

Apart from these poignant experiences, there was this sense and feelings of excitement as displayed by some mothers and children who stood on the queue to receive free school uniforms, canvas, stockings and books donated by the government. I listened to stories unfold particularly the unique circumstances and experiences of some stakeholders.

Having lived in Owerri Imo state for decades, I have understanding of what teachers and families experienced (for example, working for between three to six months without wages). I could connect with the different feelings and the web of emotions of my participants including the pain, then excitement and appreciation from both parents and practitioners for the current government's efforts. Their story is part of their history, perceptions and lived experiences as practitioners and parents. The participants' stories reminded me of my own past experiences and difficulties encountered both as a parent with four children, and as a teacher working in schools. I related this to my participants experiences at the beginning of the fieldwork. Dealing with some of their high expectations and correcting their preconceived notions was another challenge I was confronted with in the field. For instance, in some settings, I sensed this false impression about what my presence was capable of doing and the improvement that would follow after my visit. To some of them, I was a 'messiah' from England on a fact finding mission with the aim of bringing in materials and effecting changes in the system thus these group of participants repeatedly made reference to "See we have nothing. Please when you go back tell them; tell the international community about our experiences and how we and our children are suffering. We need help from them. We don't have anything we need toys and play things. Please go back and tell them in London and arrange to bring as many things as you can for us when next you visit at least you now know our problems".

To some others, I was capable of influencing the government and its policies in ECE. **thus** they came to the conclusion that I had the aim of presenting my findings to well-meaning organizations abroad and the Nigerian government and I would be returning in the near future with the types of "facilities you people have in London". Most of the practitioners took time to show me broken chairs, doors and ceilings, leaking roofs, pot holes in the classes, poor toilet facilities, dilapidated buildings, bare play grounds, play areas and other facilities they required. The most uncomfortable position for me was when two parents and some teachers requested for 'coke money' (meaning more to buy a drink) 'transport fare' and 'anything for the children'. I was careful not to make false promises and I equally turned down such requests without damaging the relationships I had built and without making the participants feel bad or 'used'. I reiterated that while the study was not designed for financial gains or quid pro quo relationship, their voices and knowledge gained on their perception on quality and access available to children may be useful in shaping the provision in ECE in Owerri in the near future.

5.7.8 Key terms and concepts

Some key concepts are briefly discussed in the sections below. They include concepts such as constructionism, subjective meanings, interpretivism, process quality, structural quality, quality in ECE, affordability of care, and actors.

Constructionism

This is an ontological perspective based on the assumption that knowledge of the world or reality is socially constructed (Saunders et al., 2003). Constructionists acknowledge the existence of multiple realities noting that different people could have different constructions of the same phenomenon or reality. According to Schutt (2006) the constructionist view is a perspective that illuminates how the different stakeholders in social settings make sense of their lived experiences or beliefs. It assumes that reality is something that exists in the mind of individuals and the researcher has the responsibility of understanding, reconstructing and analysing those realities. According to Lincoln

& Denzin (1998) the subject and object are both in the meaning making process. This approach enables the researcher to obtain a holistic view of phenomenon being investigated.

Subjective meanings

Interpretivists hold the view that the social world or reality does not exist in an objective form. It is subjectively constructed or created and recreated through meanings which are mainly based on or are influenced by personal feelings, experiences, values, perceptions or opinion of persons who experience it. This qualitative research aims to uncover meanings; interpretations and understanding of provision for children as perceived by key players in ECE. It is based on the creation and recreation of the social world which is not value free.

Interpretivism

The interpretivist approach to social inquiry suggests that the social world or reality is a construction of different actors or individuals and this world cannot be understood by employing the research principles of the natural sciences. The assumption is that individuals can create subjective and inter subjective meanings through interactions. The interest of a researcher employing this approach, therefore, is to understand occurrences or events through the meanings assigned to it by the participants (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). Its tenet is based on the assumption that reality does not exist in an objective and observable form as predicted by positivists, rather it is experienced subjectively through meanings and interpretations people give to it. In other words, the world or reality cannot be objectively observed and understood from outside, it should be observed subjectively from inside and through the experiences of people engaged in it (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gray, 2004).

Actors in early years education

These are individuals or groups who exercise agency (human agency) and possess a common frame of reference and are bound together with respect to their common interest and knowledge of social reality, in this case, with regard to early years education and care.

Process quality

This dimension of quality refers to the actual experiences of children that occur in early years settings or centres and it includes child and teacher interactions and other children, activities children engage in, materials available for learning, health and safety measures put in place and the relationships with parents.

Structural quality

Structural quality also referred to as the programme standards are the structural requirements and teacher characteristics of early years programmes which contribute to quality in indirect ways than the process elements and are primarily regulated through government legislations. Structural elements define and include the physical environment such as buildings, indoor and outdoor space, class or group size, curriculum, adult-child ratio, education, training, compensation, and the work conditions of teachers.

Affordable childcare

Within the context of this study, affordability is expressed not solely in monetary terms or the ability of families to purchase early childhood education and care for children; it refers to both the resources and cost of provision. Affordability is subjective given the differences in household income and the level of government financial assistance made available to families

Summary

Chapter five presented the research methodology and research design, including the epistemological stance and theoretical underpinnings of this study. In this chapter I explained the use of a pilot study in the development of the project. I have discussed my role as a researcher, and the influence of my human self in the research in relation to the methods and methodology. Chapter 6 will present the data and findings of this study.

Chapter Six

Data Analysis and Presentation

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of data in this study. It is organised around the approach to and procedure for analysing the interviews and questionnaire data generated in the course of the research. The purpose of this analysis is to facilitate an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. Sample demographics, the profile of case study settings as well as observations of facilities in the case study settings will be presented. A description of the coding process which guided the analysis is highlighted. Excerpts drawn directly from interview scripts are presented to support the themes that I identified in the case study.

To reiterate, data collection and subsequent analysis in this study was driven by three main goals. First, to create knowledge of how parents, practitioners and employees of the MOE in Owerri perceive existing access to and quality of the provision for children, and to establish if their views and experiences are consistent or at variance with the government's vision and claims of providing equal access to high quality learning to all children as explicitly stated in the 2007 Integrated National Policy on Early Childhood Education in Nigeria. The second objective was to analyse the process and structural elements of quality in the case study settings and how they impact on the quality of provision available to children. The third objective is to analyse the cost and affordability of early years education and its impact on access to provision. As stated earlier, methodological triangulation involving the use of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and observation of facilities was employed. This increased the credibility and rigour of the analysis.

A concurrent triangulation approach was utilized in this study. Both questionnaire and interview data collection and analysis took place separately yet simultaneously during one data collection phase (Creswell, 2013, Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011, Salkind, 2010, Terrell, 2012). The data collection commenced with the interviews with parents and practitioners. Observation of facilities

in the case study settings took place at the same time as the interviews and during several other visits to the settings while the questionnaire was administered to four employees of the Ministry of Education immediately after the interviews thus saving time when compared with sequential approach where collection and analysis of qualitative data precede the collection and analysis of quantitative data collection or vice-versa. Albeit information was collected separately, it was brought together during the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Following the transcription of all interviews, analysis of the information gathered from the questionnaires, interviews and observations was organized with a view to making sense of the data generated. While I have used photographic images as part of the observation, my report does not feature photographs that reveal identifying information about my human subjects because of ethical concerns and my pledge with respect to anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Nevertheless, proprietors of settings in the case study gave consent for me to take photographs during my research, and to use images of indoor and outdoor play facilities, classroom walls, floors, ceilings, children's chairs and tables and part of the school premises. Photographic evidence and observations carried out complemented the data generated from the interviews.

6.1 Sample demographics

The characteristics of the participants in this study, which varied in terms of their personal characteristics such as gender, roles, educational background, years of experience, and ages of their children in the case study settings are discussed in this section as these attributes influenced the opinions of the respondents and why they responded the way they did. Interviewing different stakeholders on account of their roles, common goals, personal experiences, knowledge and understanding of ECE in Owerri, created a platform that enabled a comparison of their varied views.

6.2 Sources of data and gender mix of participants

Four completed questionnaires were received from employees of the Ministry of Education who were involved in the supervision and monitoring of schools, while interview data were gathered from parents and teachers only. Teachers were selected from private and government funded or public settings of differing sizes and geographical locations. Private settings as applied in this study refers to for-profit, non-state or non-government providers such as individuals, religious organizations, voluntary organizations and educational institutions. The interview schedules and questionnaires administered (see Appendix A and B) were slightly different but designed to answer the research questions. In terms of gender mix, six (6) male parents, fifteen (15) female parents and twenty-two (22) female teachers in the case study settings granted interviews while one (1) male and three (3) females (employees of the Ministry of Education) completed the questionnaires. This brought the total number of participants in the study to forty-seven (47). This is summarised in the table below. The high number of female practitioners is indicative of a highly gendered ECE workforce in Owerri.

Research Participants: Demographics of Respondents by Gender

Type of Setting	Names of Settings	Female Parents	Male Parents	Female Teachers	Male Teachers
Government	TWP	5	-	3	-
Private	SS	3	-	1	-
Government	MSP	3	1	1	-
Private	BO	1	1	3	-
Government	ORJ	-	-	3	-
Government	URT	2	-	4	-
Government	UZI	1	2	2	-
Private	OLU	-	-	3	-
Government	MOD	-	2	2	-
Total	9	15	6	22	-

Table 6.1

6.3 Educational qualifications and experiences of participants

The academic qualifications of practitioners in this study revealed a group of qualified professionals. Two (2) out of the 22 early years practitioners interviewed held decision making positions (as proprietors). With respect to educational background, the practitioners in this study claimed they had qualifications ranging from Diploma to Postgraduate Degree. For instance, a proprietor claimed she had Nigerian Certificate in Education in Special Education (NCE is the minimum entry level qualification for Primary School Teachers). Other qualifications held by participants were a First degree in English Language; Masters in Curriculum Development and Planning/enrolled on a PhD programme in early Childhood Education. Another proprietor had a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Education but had attended workshops and seminars in ECE. Two teachers had Nigerian Certificate in Education while one had Higher Diploma Certificate. In sum therefore, 19 practitioners had a minimum of first degree, two had NCE and one had Diploma.

Apart from the proprietor of one setting (called BO for the purposes of this study), none of the practitioners had any qualification in ECE. Another common feature in all but one case study setting is that irrespective of group sizes, there were no teaching assistants otherwise known as class attendants in some schools. Again there were no teachers with qualifications in special education neither were children with special needs admitted in both private and state funded case study settings. All four employees of the Ministry of Education had first degree in addition to either a Diploma or NCE. I was unable to determine the educational qualifications of the parents in this study. Initial effort to discuss this topic made some uncomfortable hence I did not continue to probe but I can confirm that the parents in this study was a mix of highly educated and very articulate to little education and unable to communicate fluently. A parent claimed to be a sportsman (footballer), others were either civil servants, traders, fulltime housewives, businessmen and women.

Practitioners had a wealth of experience which ranged between 6 months for new entrants to the profession, to about 32 years of experience for older teachers. The qualifications of the participants summarised in the table below revealed that although practitioners in this study had previous qualification in education, only one head teacher said her qualifications were specifically related to ECE and Special Education. Some claimed to have attended seminars and workshops in early years education. Table 6.2 below presents the educational qualifications and years of experience of teachers involved in this study.

Educational qualifications and experiences of participants

Type of Setting	Teacher	Educational Qualification	Years of Experience
Government	TWP T1	Nigerian Certificate in Education (RK/history); Bachelor of Education (Education History)	Over 18years
	TWP T2	Nigerian Certificate in Education (French)	Over 10 Years
	TWP T3	Nigerian Certificate in Education (Education/Religion)	6 months
Private	SS T1	Nigerian Certificate in Education	Over 12 years
Government	MSP T1	First Degree-Bachelor in Education	Over 10Years
Private	BO Proprietor	First degree in English special education; Masters in Curriculum Development & Planning; PhD in ECE (in view)	30Years
	BO T1	TC2 Nigerian Certificate in Education; First degree (in view)	About 20years
	BO T2	Nigerian Certificate in Primary Health Education & B.Sc. in Health Education	5Years
Government	ORJ T1	Bachelor in Education	12years
	ORJ T2	Degree holder B.ED-Igbo /Social Studies	28years
	ORJ T3	First Degree in Educational Management	20years
Government	URAT T1	Nigerian Certificate in Education-NCE	25Years
	URAT 2	Nigerian Certificate in Education	10years
	URAT 3	NCE; Bachelor in Education	10years
	URAT T4	Nigerian Certificate in Education, Degree holder	10years
Private	OLU Proprietor	Bachelor of Science in Health Education	18years
	OLU T1	Nigerian Certificate in Education Accountancy	5years
	OLU T2	Higher Diploma -Environmental Health Tech	6 Months
Government	UZI T1	First Degree	22years
	UZI T2	First Degree-Igbo Linguistics	22years
Government	Mod T1	Nigerian Certificate in Education, Bachelor in Education	10years
	Mod T3	Nigerian Certificate in Education, Bachelor in Education	32years

Table 6.2

6.4 Profile of government funded and private case study settings

6.4.1 School 1: MSP (Government Funded Setting)

MSP, (pseudonym) is a government primary school located within residential area in the state capital and is believed to serve low income families. This setting caters for children between 3-5 years. Generally speaking the physical environment was not impressive particularly when compared with the well-resourced settings in this study. The school sign post was barely visible and there was nothing to indicate it is a school premises. A long building housed about five poorly lit classes, apart from two very old buildings containing about nine classrooms with a narrow space separating both buildings, there was no playground or outdoor play equipment for recreational activities and no football field. All the classrooms had tables and chairs marked UBEC/SUBEB, acronym for (Universal Basic Education Commission / State Universal Basic Education Board).

Each classroom had two teachers and all the classes except one had a very large number of children with very little space in-between each table. Apart from sections of the wall painted black and which served as chalkboards and notice boards, the walls were bare and dirt. There were no displays of teachers and children's paintings, drawings, works or activities. The floors of some classes were dusty and had pot-holes. There were no indoor play materials such as toys, construction blocks, water and sand trays. There weren't any books, mark making materials nor home corner areas. The school library is an empty room with three reading tables, chairs and two empty shelves without books. A good number of children's desks and chairs recently supplied to the setting were arranged in one corner of the room, supporting the claim of government involvement of the provision for children in ECE. An open space across the road outside the school premises, served as a playground for children in the primary section. Apart from the narrow space in-between two buildings, children in the nursery section had no playground and no toys to play with and few of the balls provided for the children from time to time were purchased by the teachers.

Pictures from MSP



Figure 6.1: Pictures of nursery classrooms in MSP setting

6.4.2 School 2: TWP (Government Funded Setting)

This government funded setting within the state capital is believed to serve children from low income families. Like other primary schools in Imo state, it provides education and care for children between three to five years. The physical outlook and aesthetics was very different from other government schools. The football field was uniformly green. Next to the field was a pavement that went right round the school and pebbles were used to cover up the empty spaces between the pavement and the corridor leading into all the classes, leaving a visual impression that can be described as interesting. The school was fenced and there were a number of newly built classroom blocks and a borehole to ensure regular water supply. All the classes had new books, chairs and

tables which had just been supplied by the government. In front of the head teacher's office was a beautiful canopy long enough for about ten set of chairs. Parents and teachers described the school as 'well equipped and the best government school in Imo state'. Albeit the setting had the above mentioned learning materials, regrettably, it had no electricity, toilet facilities, nor indoor and outdoor play equipment for children. Children ran out from different classes into the open spaces to urinate or defecate on pieces of papers which were either thrown under a stair case leading to the first floor of the building or behind the classrooms. Children ran around and played in groups. They had no outdoor play equipment or facilities thus confirming the claims made by the interviewees about the lack of play facilities for children.

Pictures from TWP



Figure 6.2 **Pictures from TWP setting showing a nursery classroom and outdoor area**

6.4.3 School 3: SS (Private Setting)

Located in a quiet middle class residential neighbourhood, this school had provision for children from crèche up until secondary school and all sections were located within the same premises. The high cost of education in the setting meant attendance was limited mainly to children from middle and high income families. A security officer received visitors outside the gate and with the consent of the head teacher, ushered them to the reception. It is a large compound with well-maintained lawn, flowers and masquerade tress (*Polyalthia Longifolia*). The atmosphere was cosy. The school had three large structures, two of which are two storey buildings with about nine classrooms on each floor. The third structure was a building that served as the administrative block. It had a well-furnished, tiled and air-conditioned reception, a school clinic with a nurse, a cash office and the director's office. Put together, these structures formed a U shape. Next to the administrative block was the car park and play area which had sand pit, plastic tunnel slides and plastic tree house slides for children in the nursery classes.

The population of the school was quite low for instance some nursery classes had between four to seven children only. Apart from being a fairly new school, the high tuition fee may explain the small class sizes. The well mowed lawn with two goal posts served as the school field. Apart from the lawn areas and the sand pit for children's play, every other area in the setting was cemented and very clean. The classes were tiled, children's tables and chairs very neatly arranged and children's work well displayed on the walls. There were shelves with children's books and other work materials. This setting had a borehole which ensured regular supply of water and a generator that supplied electricity. Sanitation in the setting was good and the toilets were in very good condition. Apart from the outdoor play equipment children had construction blocks and some other toys to play with indoors.

Pictures from SS Setting



Figure 6.3: Pictures showing a classroom, reception area, school building and outdoor play equipment

6.4.4 School 4: Olu (Private Setting)

This private school is in the same geographical location as URT. There was no sign post for the school and I gathered that it was deliberate. The reason given by the head teacher for this was that putting up a sign post would attract the 'prying eyes of both the tax officers and school inspectors from the ministry of education'. The proprietor reported that 'so long as I do not put sign board nobody will disturb me. I have been operating like this for more than two years and nobody has come here since then. One of my friends that has a school like mine gave me the idea and it has worked for me'.

The setting had a population of about 60 children and had provision for children in crèche up until primary four (between 18 months to 9 years). Children in primary four and five share the same classroom and are taught the same thing. This was attributed to the lack of space in the setting as the nursery classes were cramped. This setting was located within a very small space that was fenced right round with rusty zinc. The brick wall for each class was built halfway then metal and wooden poles at different points were used to support the weight of the roof thus leaving some gaps between the last brick work and the ceiling or roof. Extension work for one more classroom was in progress and few charts and pictures of people and fruits dotted the walls of the classes. Although they claimed to have toys, less than 5 soft toys were seen on the wall, away from the children's reach. The only outdoor play equipment was an improvised swing made of two sets of twine hanging down a rectangular metal pole into the holes drilled on the sides of two half cut plastic baby baths. In a corner of the setting were three blue children's potty spaced out under a big mango tree. It served as toilet to the sixty children in the nursery classes. Teachers were meant to empty and wash it from time to time in the proprietor's house which is within the same premises. The proprietor's sitting room served as the crèche which had about eight children under the care of one staff.

Pictures from Olu





Figure 6.4: Pictures Olu showing classrooms and children's toilet area

6.4.5 School 5: MOD (Government Funded Setting)

This primary school is located within the metropolis and caters for children between three to five years. Although it is described as a "model" school, it was in no way better than the other government settings around the metropolis. A gateman controlled the movement of people and cars in and out of the setting. Teachers supervised different groups on the playground. Children played and ran around, some chasing each other while some others played drums for those marching round the sandy field in preparation for school inter-house sports. The buildings were old and some of the classes closest to the head teacher's office had broken windows, doors and ceilings. The office had some books, and some children's tables and chairs that had just been supplied by the government. There were no windows in most classes and the doors were in very bad shape. Most of the

buildings had cracked dirty walls and lots of holes on the floor. The library had few chairs, and two book shelves which had few books. New chairs had been delivered by the government so they were neatly arranged according to colours in different rows in the nursery class. There had never been electricity and there was no water supply. Teachers purchased water from outside the setting while children brought drinking water in their cans because the only borehole in setting was faulty. The few toilets available were in very bad state and setting lacked a football field, outdoor and indoor play equipment and toys for children. The classroom walls were dirty, bare and some sections of the walls painted black, served as chalk and notice boards. There were a few charts displaying parts of the body, alphabets and numbers in some classes but no piece of work belonging to the children was on display. Each crowded nursery classroom had between sixty to seventy children with two teachers. Classes were merged because space was a challenge. Like most other settings, it lacked the most basic resources and staff.

Pictures from MOD



Figure 6.5: Pictures from MOD showing classrooms and outdoor area

6.4.6 School 6: Orj (Government Funded Setting)

Orj is located in a semi-urban area and it caters for children between 3-5 years. The school had no fence so it served as a thoroughfare for people around the vicinity. The only noticeable play material in the open space in this setting was a football field. One storey building served children in the upper primary classes while two old structures next to it served the nursery and other primary classes. A classroom wall in one of the old buildings was so badly cracked and almost falling apart that it was abandoned. Although the teachers praised the government for prompt payment of salaries and for providing tables and chairs, books, socks and little bursary for primary classes, this setting has never had electricity, water, indoor or outdoor play equipment. There was no toilet so children and even teachers use the open spaces behind the classrooms and nearby bushes whenever they had the need to use the toilet. Midway into the interview the children went out for break and different groups bent over in open spaces and in the view of everyone, to urinate while some went further into the bush. This was a confirmation of the teachers' claims. One of the teachers looked at me and said "Ihunanuya, eha wukwa ubochi niene" (you have seen it. this thing is every day). The balls children played with from time to time were their personal ones.

Pictures from Orj



Figure 6.6: Pictures from Orj showing some classrooms

6.4.7 School 7: UZI (Government Funded Setting)

This primary school is located within the state capital. The setting only has provision for children between three to six years and is mainly attended by children from low income families. The physical appearance is not different from other government settings. Apart from a newly built structure for the upper primary classes, every other building in the school was very old and some of the classes in the nursery section had broken and in some cases no windows at all, there were leaking roofs, rooms were without ceilings and the school has never had electricity. There was no water supply because the borehole was faulty so teachers purchased water from outside the school while children brought in drinking water in their water cans.

The teachers confirmed that only one toilet served about 300 hundred children in both nursery and primary sections. Apart from the football field, there was no outdoor or indoor play equipment, nor toys or activity areas for children. The classrooms were poorly lit, the walls dirty and some sections of the walls in each classrooms were painted black served as chalk and notice boards. Apart from two charts displaying the letters of the alphabet and numbers in the two nursery classes, the walls were bare and none of the children's paintings, drawings, or projects were on display in any of the classes. Each nursery class had two teachers but the rooms were crowded and they merged classes due to scarcity of space. For instance, nursery 1A and 1B shared one room so there were between fifty to sixty children with two teachers in a class. The library which served children in primary classes was quite small. It had about three small shelves with few books, four chairs, four tables and there were about six brown cartons which contained free books delivered by the state government. There was no fence in the school so it served as a thoroughfare for people within the neighbourhood.

Pictures from Uzi



Figure 6.7: Pictures showing nursery classrooms at UZI setting

6.4.8 School 8: URT (government funded setting)

Located within a rural area, this setting is about 16 kilometres from the state capital and it shared the same premises with a church. The road leading to the school was flooded and bumpy. There were two old buildings and one new classroom block that had two classes and the head teacher's office. The walls lacked paint and two rusty poles formed the goal posts of a sandy football pitch at both ends. Another set of poles which used to be the swing for children stood next to a meliana tree in front of one of the classrooms. The older buildings were long poorly lit open plan halls. The walls were bare except for one or two pictures of letters of the alphabet and types of fruits. Some

classes were demarcated with blackboards while block work was going on in some other areas. Apart from the sandy football pitch, there was no other play equipment or toys.

Children in the nursery classes ran around and played with each other while the senior classes played with one or two footballs. The school had no water supply and depended solely on private borehole next to the school. The only toilet in the school was one pit toilet that served the entire school. There had never been an electricity supply and unlike some government schools in the metropolis that had new plastic tables and chairs, the furniture in this setting was quite different. The few plastic chairs and tables in the head teacher's office were not distributed because there were no matching chairs. Despite the state of this setting, both parents and teachers sang praises of the government in power whom they claimed paid teachers' salaries promptly, provided free education, bursary, and learning materials for children.

Pictures from URAT



Figure 6.8: Pictures showing nursery classrooms at URAT setting

6.4.9 School 9: BO (Private Setting)

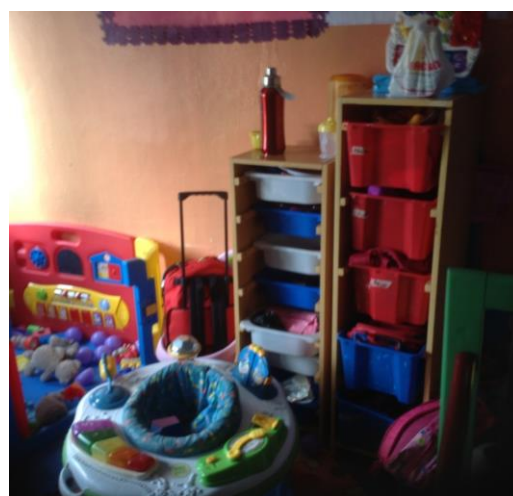
This private setting is located in a very busy area in the middle of the town very close to about three banks, the main stadium, and lots of shops. It is attended mainly by children from middle and high income families and it has provision for children between 18 months (crèche) to about 9 -10 years (primary four or five) when the children are allowed to progress to secondary school. By the side of

a sliding glass door leading into the reception was a framed glass box containing the photographs and names of every staff in the school. This school was a two storey modern building. Masquerade tress (*Polyalthia Longifolia*) run through the entire length of the fence. Originally designed as a residential building, the compound was fenced and it had a security house with a security guard next to the gate. A section of the compound was layered with synthetic grass while every other area was cemented and tidy. The play area was resourced with outdoor play equipment such as a see-saw, swing, slide, climbing rope, plastic tree playhouse, a merry-go- round, balls, play tunnels and a spring rider.

Next to the security house was a canopy with a noise proof Leister generator and in-between the generator and the classroom wall was a half-court basketball court. This space also served as a car park when not in use. The reception had a very large home theatre and television, desk top computer, seats lined up for visitors, a water dispenser and a refrigerator directly behind the receptionist. It also had a split air conditioner. Different toy cars, horses, and bicycles were neatly arranged along the hall between the reception and the nursery classes on the ground floor. There were two separate and smaller structures at the back of the main building. The kitchen is on the left wing. It was an air conditioned room used as the library with television sets and it had a good number of books and teaching aids such as a model of a human skeleton, heart models, and various charts. Between the library and the kitchen was the school borehole with a pumping machine. The classes were not crowded but they were quite small in terms of size. There were big stickers with the inscription "Welcome to our Class" or "Welcome to X" on most doors. Each window had curtains and there were a number of shelves for children's work and textbooks. Resources such as charts with numbers and letters of the alphabet, children's photographs, projects, drawings, paintings, birthday charts, and pictures of local fruits and vegetables adorned the walls and colourful boards in each class.

Photographs of the proprietor, the president of Nigeria, and the governor of Imo state were equally on display. The first floor which had more classes had two water dispensers while every class had a television and an air conditioner. Each floor had clean toilets and dust bins dotted most corners of the building, and there was a big bundle of collapsible swimming pool. The beautifully tiled second floor houses the ICT room which had about 9 nicely displayed computers, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) tables and chairs. There were about twenty boxes of violins, four guitars, a piano, trumpets, flutes and other local musical instruments displayed in the music room. The art room had different art works, drawings and paintings made by the children. There were paper mesh, crayons, poster colours and collage materials. The crèche was decorated with a number of colourful teaching and learning resources for children, sleeping mats, large plastic play pens, baby cots, baby walkers, prams, balls, soft toys, and neatly labelled boxes in shelves. There was also a nappy changing room.

Pictures from BO



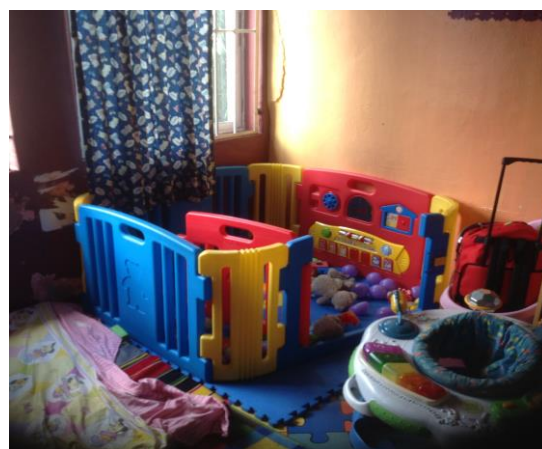
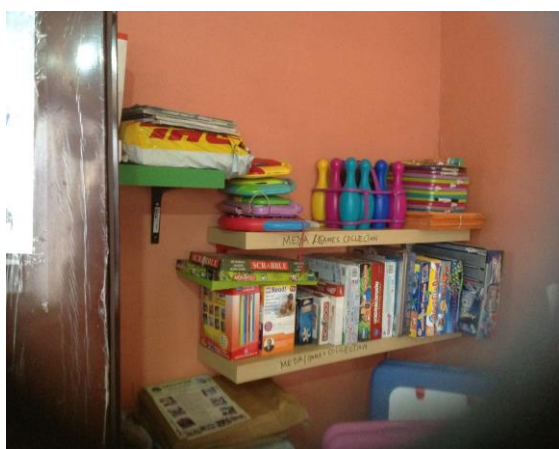
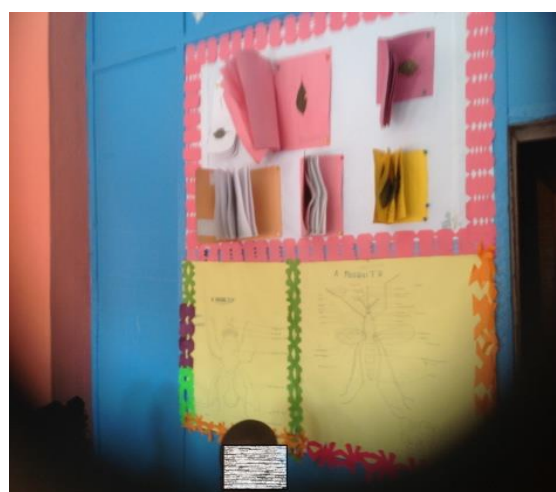
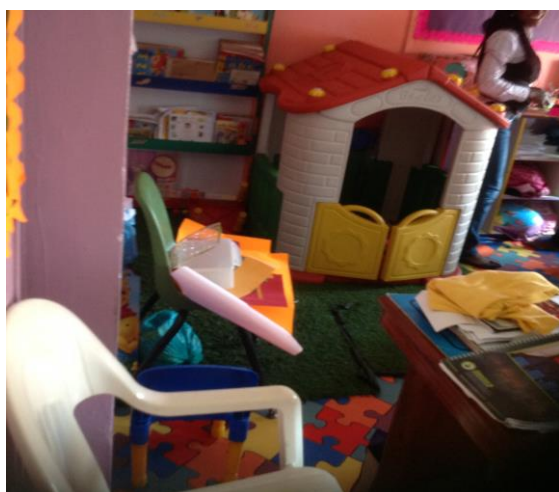


Figure 6.9: Pictures showing nursery classrooms at BO setting

6.5 Analytic strategy in this study

An inductive or "bottom up" (Creswell, 2012) approach to data analysis was employed. This was an iterative process that began with data collection from stakeholders in ECE in Owerri, Imo State, transcription of the interviews, then immersing myself in the data in order to make sense of the information. This enabled me to begin to understand various stakeholders' accounts and lived experiences as they relate to the issues of access and quality in ECE in Owerri. I resisted applying my personal pre-judgements or preconceptions by developing codes from the data, rather than fitting them into a pre-existing coding frame. This approach is thought to decrease bias in the analysis (Braun, 2006; Burnard, 2008). This study draws on Creswell's lead for developing and organizing qualitative data analysis as a guide to the approach to this data analysis (see Creswell, 2012).

6.6 The coding process

Creswell's model of the coding process was employed in the analysis of stakeholders' perspectives on access and quality in the provision for children. This analysis was grounded in the data generated. Bearing in mind the particular questions that this study sought to answer, the analytical process began with my 'getting a sense of the whole' (Creswell, 2012). Principally, through in-depth reading of raw data, in order to make sense of the lived experiences of the stakeholders involved in this study. Some have described this as familiarizing or immersing oneself in the data, deconstructing or breaking down data into component parts to see what is included, reading and re-reading for better understanding of its content and then breaking it down into categories or codes that describe the content (Sargeant, 2012). It entailed thorough engagement with the data, identifying patterns, relevant comments, views and responses that relate to the issues being analysed, highlighting striking statements, excerpts or quotes, themes, and categories in the responses given by the participants as they present their interpretations and different ways of experiencing government policies and provisions in early years education in Owerri.

The organization, management and the subsequent process of data analysis in this study was aided by the use of technology. Formatted and carefully transcribed interview data were stored in a word processing programme, where important comments were highlighted. I explored the use of Excel spreadsheet for the initial coding, by grouping of similar ideas expressed by participants in columns and highlighting themes with colour codes. The challenges encountered and inability to handle all of the data in Excel led to the use qualitative analysis software, Nvivo10, to support the final analysis. In Nvivo workspace, I created a new project file after which all interview documents and photographs were imported, explored and coded. Different nodes were created and all references similar to each code were saved or stored at the nodes. A text search query was then run. This enabled me to reflect on and visualize how the participants talked about or made references to specific themes in the coded segments. Though these programmes were very useful, suffice to say, that they did not analyse the data. They merely facilitated the analytic process.

Critical to this analytic process was the preliminary coding. In this process, I reduced the data into meaningful units and assigned codes to these (Creswell, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, relevant codes, (some general, others more specific), were assigned to segments of the transcribed texts. In coding the text in this study, I used in-vivo codes (using the actual words of the participants) as well as codes I constructed to describe units of meaning in the texts. Line by line or open coding enabled me to focus on the details of each line. This process helped me to minimize the chance that I would miss important aspects of the data (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Once no new concept or information other than existing ones emerged from the data, the coding process was discontinued. It is important to note that some data fitted into more than one theme. The aim of the coding was to assemble the different meanings, contradictory statements or claims, interpretations and rich descriptions vital to the holistic understanding of the issues of access and quality in the provision for children and to reconstruct the numerous perspectives and experiences of the stakeholders in ECE in Owerri.

The initial analysis resulted in 74 broad codes. Following several readings and review of these, I worked to reduce overlap and redundancy (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard et al., 2008; Creswell, 2012). Consequently, similar or related categories were grouped together under themes. They were further reduced until broad themes for the final report were created. An initial code was established when I determined that there were groups of similar responses to interview questions or questionnaires across more than two participants. I made notes on these similar responses, and also made note when there were contradictions within the responses or across respondents. I also took into consideration if my observations of the settings seemed to support or contradict the responses. The codes were then grouped together to create themes that helped to organise the data in relation to the research objectives.

6.7 Overview of the themes

My analysis of the data from the interviews and questionnaires resulted in the construction of 7 general themes, each comprised of 2 – 4 codes that represent similarities in responses from different participants. A table of the themes and codes is presented, followed by a narrative overview of the themes and codes. The themes are then described in detail with examples from the data in the following sections of this chapter.

Themes and codes generated from the data

Themes	Codes
Disparities in professional development	
	Training is important
	There are Inconsistencies in opportunities for training
	There is favouritism with regard to who gets to attend training
	Overall, a general sense of satisfaction with training
Increased government involvement in ECE	
	Availability of double shifts (longer hours of care/education)
	Differences in private and government settings
	Inequitable access for children with disabilities and children under 3
Quality concerns	
	Government provides tables and chairs – this is positive and important
	General dissatisfaction with the quality of the environment
	Expression of gratitude for what is provided
Disparities in access to government funding	
	Government is providing affordable care
	Inconsistencies in the funding of private and public ECE
	Access to high quality limited by cost, affordability, and availability
Parental involvement	
	Parents perceived their relationship with settings as positive
	Government has become a barrier between parents and teachers
Changing family needs and patterns	
	Satisfied parents who needed space and time for children while working
	Dissatisfied parents (time at school does not work with their schedule)
	Parents dissatisfied with children spending too much time in school
	Teachers perceptions of the influx of children into state schools, impacting group size, class management and quality of children's' learning
	Teachers well-being at risk
	Children's resilience, despite poor learning conditions
Disparities in early childhood curriculum and minimum standards	
	ECE policies and implementation guidelines in place
	A majority of the stakeholders had no knowledge of its existence
	Variations in programme content and curriculum implementation
	Safety and quality concerns
Regulatory systems for overseeing quality in ECE	
	Existence of a regulatory mechanism in Imo State
	Inconsistencies and ineffectiveness of the quality assurance systems in ECE
	Parents and teachers perceptions of quality in provision varied

Table 6.3

The first theme presented in the findings is related to the disparities in professional development and the conditions of service for the early childhood teachers. Contributing to this theme were codes that revealed that while teachers perceived that in-service training is important in order for teachers to adapt to changes in education, and to be able to 'handle' children, there were inconsistencies in opportunities for training, and the frequency of training, a perception of favouritism in the selection of teachers who receive training, and yet a general sense of satisfaction. The second theme presented in the findings relates to increased government involvement in ECE as an attempt to harmonize practice, promote equitable, affordable and more even quality for children between birth-five years in Owerri. Contributing to this theme were codes that showed that although stakeholders viewed the availability of double shifts in few state schools as part of the entitlement delivered to children and families and government's involvement as an opportunity that guaranteed access to affordable early years learning for low income families, there were marked differences between government and private sector provisions, inequitable access for disabled children and the absence of provision for birth-three year-olds in government settings.

The third theme presented is related to quality concerns in children's learning centres. Contributing to this theme were codes that showed that although stakeholders perceived government's provision of chairs and tables for children in early years education as very significant, there was a general sense of dissatisfaction with the state of children's learning environment and concerns regarding resources such as water and electricity supply, toilet facilities, play resources and classroom space for those enrolled in government settings. Nevertheless, stakeholders expressed gratitude and satisfaction despite the poor state of resources.

The fourth theme presented in the findings is related to disparities in access to government funding of early childhood education. Contributing to this theme were codes that revealed that albeit stakeholders' perceived government's funding of ECE as creating affordable child care, there were

inconsistencies in the funding and provision for children in private and public settings, and access to high quality ECE is limited by cost, affordability, and availability.

Parental involvement and effective partnership as an opportunity for improving children's learning and achievement is the fifth theme presented. Codes contributing to this theme relate to those that showed that parents perceived their relationship with settings as positive and based on mutual respect, that parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with their relationship and quality of ECE services in settings and had general sense of satisfaction with positive teacher/pupil relationship. Parents generally expressed that they had belief in their voices, and saw themselves as having equal rights and responsibility for their children's education and discipline. Parents were interested in their children's progress and appreciated information sharing with schools. However, there were also articulations that the government had become a barrier between the parents and teachers.

Changing family needs and patterns that impact on the demand for childcare services is the sixth theme presented. Contributing to this theme were codes that revealed that stakeholders perceived this issue differently, and that opinions were divided between satisfied working class parents who needed space and time for children while they were at work, parents who wanted to go back to work and were dissatisfied with the limited time available in state funded settings and could not participate in the existing double shift provision because of the logistics, and parents who felt dissatisfied with the length of time because they perceived that they lost opportunities for bonding with children who spent all day at school. The time that children spent in settings and children's learning activities were important considerations for working families in this study. Equally, teachers perceptions of the influx of children into state schools, on group size, class management and quality of children's' learning were articulated as having an impact on group size and class management. Other issues related to this theme were children's' learning and teacher's wellbeing, children's resilience despite the state of their learning conditions.

Disparities in early childhood curriculum and minimum standards that apply to settings is the seventh theme identified in the case study. Contributing to this theme were codes that revealed that although there were ECE policies and implementation guidelines in place, a majority of the stakeholders in this study had no knowledge of its existence and lacked access to the policy documents. There were variations in programme content and curriculum implementation in settings and stakeholders' perceptions of safety concerns and quality in ECE.

Regulatory systems for overseeing quality in ECE is the eighth theme presented in the findings. Contributing to this theme were codes that showed that despite the existence of a regulatory mechanism in Imo State, there were inconsistencies and ineffectiveness of the quality assurance systems in ECE. Parents and teachers' perceptions of quality in provision varied and there were some undesired consequences of weak regulation of early years education.

6.8 Data Presentation and analysis of findings

6.8.1 Analysis of the interview data

The following sections focus on the data analysis, and how the themes were constructed from the responses of the participants. The analysis was conducted according to the themes that emerged as described in the previous section. In what follows, I present the themes, with supporting quotes from the participants, with analytical commentary in some of the sections.

6.8.2 Disparities in the professional development and conditions of service of ECE practitioners

Training as an opportunity for teachers to adapt to changes in education to be able to 'handle' children

One of Nigeria's goal as stated in the 6th Edition of the National Policy on Education is the development of early childhood education workforce. Government suggested that it would be through the provision of in-service training (Nigerian Educational Research and Development

Council, 2007). The aim is to provide a well-qualified workforce required for improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools including ECE. It is to be achieved through exposure to innovations in the profession and in-service training which shall be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education and shall take care of all inadequacies (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). This study therefore sought to explore the perceptions of teachers with regard to the availability or lack of in-service training or staff development opportunities, and why such trainings were particularly important and how often they attended the trainings.

When asked what in-service training meant to them as professionals, the teachers interviewed unanimously acknowledged the benefits of teacher development and training opportunities. For many, adequate training was considered very important because it prepared them for their roles, particularly in a dynamic and ever changing world. The importance attached to training and development was revealed in statements or teachers' comments such as "Woow, honestly this training that is, opened our minds"; "it helps us to know how to handle the children"; "equips the teacher" and " It helps me to stand bold while teaching ". All teachers shared similar sentiments about how much attending training meant to them as teachers:

Because education is more or less everyday life, so it is very encouraging that once in a while you go and get some knowledge on how you handle your children because erm, erm education changes, its dynamic so once in a while there could be some changes, so these changes one needs to go such training for you to be able to bag that knowledge there is need for a teacher to go, undergo some training so that you can be able to adapt to your changing environment (*Proprietor in private setting*).

It is very, very important in handling these kids. Without the training it will be difficult to handle them but when you attend these training, attend er seminars and workshop you find the job very ease because there you'll be taught the techniques you use in handling the kids (*Teacher in government setting*.)

Honestly, this training, that is opened our minds. Honestly I as a graduate there are certain things we learn through during this ehh training that we were not taught in the University then. Honestly it has en-enlarged my, my erm knowledge it has exposed me to a lot of things. Things that will help you to you know relax in your place of work to do better in your chosen field (*Teacher in private Setting*).

The teacher in the private setting confirmed that although she had university degree, in-service training supposedly equipped more in her role as an ECE teacher. The desire to acquire new knowledge, skills, equip themselves to embrace changes, challenges and strengthen practice in an ever changing world was a common desire observed in the teachers in this study.

Inconsistencies in opportunities for training

Findings showed that not all teachers in this study had an opportunity to attend training programmes. Two teachers and the proprietor in one of the private setting in this study confirmed that no provision was in place for teacher professional development. Although the two teachers had Diploma certificates, they had no qualification or training in ECE. The proprietor promised to send teachers on training but no definite date or time frame was fixed. All teachers in the remaining eight case study settings confirmed that training opportunities existed.

Infrequency of training for teachers

Examining and probing further to establish how often they attended trainings, their responses revealed disparities in terms of experiences and frequency of in-service training. The teachers said that albeit leaders or section heads of early years classes in each setting were privileged to attend trainings on a regular basis, other teachers were not. Those who regularly had access to training workshops and seminars in both government and private funded settings confidently said:

Government from time to time send us for workshops, seminars on early child. Emm in-service training, I attend seminars. I attend workshops on early child, Yes, yes, yes in ECCDE in municipal we have some emer an organization that brings all of us together and we do meet once a month (*Teacher in government setting in urban area*).

We do it once, once per session. That is, a period of ehh two weeks per session, normally during the long vacation. Different lecturers from different universities are in-they're invited to you know a sort of refresher, refresher the training that is the teacher training program, emphasizing the skills, the necessary skills and introducing the modern innovation in education to the teachers in the classroom. It is available to every teacher in early childhood education (*Teacher in government setting in semi-urban area*).

Once in every term we have ehh external training either here in the school or they go to ermm Lagos, Abuja for training. Then in between, during the term we do in-service training here because ehh I train for other schools as well so we do eh professional training more than three times in every term but there has to be one external one, either the external er facilitator is coming in, or we're going out to somewhere. We bring people from the UK, we've brought people also from America you know once in a while (*Proprietor in private setting*).

In contrast, a good number of practitioners in state funded and private schools clearly indicated that though training opportunities existed, the attendance patterns, continuity, and access to such programmes was limited or varied greatly. For instance, in response to the question how often do you attend these trainings? Their responses as seen in the excerpts below showed that access to training ranged from once every term to once every academic session, once in four years and sometimes as long as once in twelve years for others:

It was once between 2003 and 2004, conducted by UNICEF, not the Federal Government one (*Teacher in government setting, urban area*).

There are regular trainings but once you have participated in one you will not be chosen in another one until after one year. Another person will go (*Teacher, government setting*).

I have done one in-service training, seminar sort of, in 2012. Since then I have not done any other one (*Teacher in government setting in semi-urban area*).

It was clear that that equal opportunities did not exist. Teachers were questioned on how they coped with everyday challenges in ECE without training. Findings revealed that the mode of addressing challenges in various sections and only way of educating or informing those who were not privileged to attend was that supervisors who were privileged to attend workshops passed on information to other teachers who did not attend:

Those who have gone when I do not go tell me what they have discussed (*Teacher in government setting, urban area*).

Er like em in ECC section, we have a supervisor who takes care of teachers and pupils there so at times, we normally have meetings. During these meetings, people, teachers air their problems, they say their problems. These are problems we encountered. From those problems raised, they will, she will give solutions on how to carry such problems (*Teacher in government setting, urban area*).

Findings showed a level of dissatisfaction among some teachers. For instance, a teacher said that the existing mode of "telling and retelling" was not good enough for her as it did not deliver the same effect as being physically present at trainings. The excerpt below explains how the teacher felt:

That is second hand information. It is good for you to be there and receive the proper information which you will implement in your own class (*Teacher in government setting, urban area*).

These narratives showed that though practitioners in this study valued in-service training and other staff development opportunities which they claimed improved their knowledge base and skills for handling children in ECE in Owerri, in reality attendance patterns and access to existing trainings was not the same for a good number of teachers.

Perception of Favouritism in the selection for training

Some teachers revealed that favouritism or "god fatherism" in the selection process for training opportunities, particularly in state schools, meant it was not a level playing ground for all. Access was limited to a selected few suggesting that the system of selection for in-service training in some state schools was anything but fair. Illustrating this point, a participant explained that:

It has been long and training has been going on, I have been complaining, and they have not sent me; many of a time they select, they select the people they know. And some of them know some teachers and they used to make use of them because they used to give them some purse after the training. If you don't know somebody, many of a time, you won't go. It's not only me. If you don't know people there, you might not have the opportunity to attend those programmes and many people are not happy about it (*Teacher in government setting*).

This account was not different from that of the head teacher of an early years group I interviewed in a government setting during the pilot phase of this study. Less confident of the selection process, she narrated how the selection for training and workshops in her own setting had been influenced by the school head:

When the form will come like they always do every year I'm sure of that but when the opportunity just come... I have to tell you the truth, our (Meaning headmistress) some of our HM that we've been having, some of them will not really bring it for the people in the eehh ECCDE section but they will like to give to the people that they find favour, the people that they like, you know that kind of a thing. So they will like to give the form to them. Like since I have been here I have not gone for the training for once. I have not for once since 2007 I have been here (*Head of the nursery section in a government setting in the metropolis*).

A general sense of job satisfaction

Practitioners were asked to comment on how satisfied they were with their jobs, salaries, allowances, and other benefits. Their responses indicated that practitioners in state and private settings had some level of satisfaction with their remuneration. However, there was a teacher in a private setting who expressed dissatisfaction with both the job and conditions of service. She claimed she was in the teaching job simply because it was the only option available at that point in time:

I am not satisfied with job, am still looking higher...Teaching in ECE because it is the only job available at the moment; Salary, It's not all that much. As you can see this school is just starting (*Teacher in private setting*).

All other teachers in both private and government funded settings expressed satisfaction with both their jobs and conditions of service which was evident in comments such as "It gives me joy while dealing with the children", "I'm satisfied with my job here", and "The conditions is not boring, It is ok". Particularly, teachers in state schools indicated how pleased they were with the prompt payment of salaries "as at when due". However, all state school teachers in this study were quick to mention that government owed them years of allowances and leave bonuses.

My Salary is encouraging but as for allowances, nothing is coming forth (*Teacher in government setting*).

Before we the teachers use to suffer, even salary, we will not see. Allowances, we're not seeing that (*Teacher in government setting*).

Mmmm since our salary, the main salary is coming as at when due, I think I'm happy about that. But that of allowances, we're not seeing that (*Teacher in government setting*).

Their responses showed that teacher remuneration was a major source of motivation for the teachers in this study. The reality for state school teachers in Imo as revealed by the participants, was their long history of being owed wages for a long period of time, sometimes between three to nine months at a time, which often led to strike actions and closure of schools. Most teachers interviewed in state funded settings claimed "it has improved more than as it was last year and past governance". Comparing their hardship and lived experiences as teachers under previous governments known for owing teachers and other civil servants, with the current one that cleared the arrears owed, they seemed pleased and praised the government in power (as at the time of this study), for responding promptly to teachers' needs. This satisfaction is expressed in the following excerpts:

I am satisfied in the job, it was before that it was as if I will regret but now, almost everything is becoming ok in this teaching field. Salaries, our salaries are being paid. Now it is being paid before, before the middle of the month. Erhen. Allowances are coming. They even promised that our leave will be given to us this month or next so with all this, why shouldn't I be happy in the field? Before now, before, before, we suffered in teaching. That time we were owed three months, four months, sometimes five months. We were managing to survive, we managed to survive but now, things changed automatically so we thank God and I thank God personally (*Teacher in government setting*).

Well em since 2011, I think teachers are somehow well paid and some allowances like dress code allowances are being paid but some allowances like leave and other are not yet paid but they have promised to pay. That is the only allowances we receive as early years practitioner. Ee since 20, that was the time teachers started being happy in the field because formally they were not well paid. Yes they were not well paid. In short, they frustrated the field ehe but now I think teachers are well paid. At least we are paid as at when due (*Teacher in government setting*).

Recently let me say the system have really improved because the previous government have not been treating us well. We stay up till the end of the month and nothing is given to us but recently, let us be sincere before the 28th of every month, we have been given our cheques, so he is really trying (*Teacher in government setting*).

I am. 100% satisfied. Yes, if this interview had been conducted maybe about two or three years earlier on, I would have just damned the interview because then the governors then were not so much as help us, our salaries were not paid on time, there were no incentives, there were no in-service training. I've been teaching it's been a rewarding experience. I have come to like working with this little child. I discovered over the years that they are full of talents. They are filled with that (*Teacher in government setting*).

Data from this study also showed that teachers in government funded settings earned more than their counterparts on the same level but employed in private settings. An indication that irrespective of qualification, conditions of service is not the same for teachers on the same level in the public and private sector in Imo State. That notwithstanding, a teacher in the private setting talked about how grateful and satisfied she was with both the climate in the setting and exposure the various trainings:

If I'm not satisfied I won't be here up to this moment. I think I'm glad, I'm happy being here. Anyway, our madam is trying. She's trying. At least this she makes us feel at home, you know it's the most important thing wherever you are working you have relaxed mind, you feel at home, the relationship is so cordial, you know, she helps us you know and ah guide us in so many things like exposing us to some of this training, Honestly to me this exposure to the many training she takes us to I appreciate that one more than whatever she can give to me. I'm okay (*Teacher in private setting*).

For this teacher, satisfaction was more about the "relaxed", "cordial" atmosphere at work, "exposure" to staff development opportunities and being able to "feel at home".

6.9 Increased government support and involvement in the provision for children

Government's determination to guarantee access to high quality of learning in ECE

Parents and practitioners in this case study were asked their perception of government support and involvement in early years education in Owerri Imo state. Albeit there were positive comments about the government's effort at providing free and quality early years education in public schools, interviewees responses revealed markedly different realities particularly as it relates to how children

between birth-five years experienced and benefited from government involvement and support in the provision of ECE. Participants talked about how involved the government in power had been and how determined the governor of Imo state was to improve the conditions of families and quality of learning in Imo state:

I have come to appreciate the government in in their struggle to provide qualitative education for the children of Imo state. Other governments have paid significant ehh you know attention to provision of education to children but in 2011 there was a real revolution when His Excellency Owelle Anayo Roachers Okorocha came into the system. He became the governor, and honestly, he has invested so much in education. In the school where I teach, I teach in. He now took it upon himself that he must see that these children get quality education. The governor in 2011 he took that mandate he said education is a priority that every child irrespective of the child's background, should be exposed to quality education. And his slogan is "make the children of the poor go to school so that they can be educated. Education is a gateway to so many things" (*Teacher in government setting*).

The government too is doing its best to make education free in the state and ermm the governor here is someone who likes who loves education one of the key policies is education so he's doing his best to make sure that he upgrades the quality of education at the public schools the government schools have (*Parent in private setting*).

Yes, it is happening, it is real; government is fulfilling those promises (*Parent in government setting*).

Nursery three have these locker-type of seats, and he has ensured recently that teachers are posted en mass to my school. I am talking of the present administration, he has done so much for us like when he moved in, between 2012, 2013, he was able to clear the arrears of the previous government. The leave allowances he was able to clear it, and he has been very good. Our salary comes on or before 28th of that month. At times 18th, he pays us (*Teacher in government setting*).

Parents and teachers relayed with excitement, their gratitude to a government they felt had done so much for children. When asked to mention the different areas of government involvement, all interviewees cited the prompt payment of teachers' salaries, provision of bursaries for primary classes, free tuition for all children under basic education, provision of socks, shoes, books, chairs and desks for children which they felt took huge burden off parents from low income backgrounds. While recalling positive government roles and involvement, some interviewees explicitly said:

Rochas promised that he will provide free education, and he provided free education from nursery one to primary 6. He brought school chairs, school uniforms, sandals and school bags. He equally gave school children money. That money he gave to children really helps fathers and mothers. When that uniform is dirty we just buy soap and wash it and on days when we do not have any food at home, we use the money given to us to buy something to eat. He really tried, he is trying. It is 500 hundred naira for secondary schools, primary schools 300 hundred naira (*Parent in government setting*).

Yes anything can change because since my life, I have not seen this structure before in the school. This one is a concrete build now it is not ordinary building but this one is a concrete build so throughout Imo state now even in the communities you will see like this structure in all the schools so I believe this government is changing education pattern in Imo state (*Parent in government setting*).

Okorochoa, the commander of free education in Africa, he's been doing his best. Before he came in as governor of Imo state, he has been doing numerous things he has different schools where people gain knowledge without paying a farthen. He has different schools he established both in the north, outside Nigeria, even in Nigeria, yes to the less privileged. He is doing marvellously well, let's face reality (*Teacher in government setting*).

Note: (Okorochoa Rochas was the governor of Imo State as at the time this interview was conducted)

The participants recalled vividly, their lived experiences, which included daily challenges and struggles to provide basic education and care for children. For instance, a teacher in one of settings recounted with emotion, how challenging it was for families to afford the most basic fees that cost about 50 and 150 Nigerian Naira (less than one British pounds). She discussed successive government failures in the provision for children and how the present regime turned things around:

He is doing marvellously well, let's face reality. When the previous, past government was in, they were in power, we do pay PTA levy of about 150, we also pay, the children, the children when I say we are paying, it is the children they also pay PTA levy of 150 and err 50 naira for handwork or they bring broom so you find out that this children find it or let's say the parents find it a lot of difficult in paying this peanuts, just a hundred and fifty naira. At times you see children coming to school with bare foot, they have no chairs, they have no lockers, they sit on the floor, so it's really challenging with such environment how can a child learn with such situation, at times the children are being driven away or they are being flogged for not paying such, the 150 so they find it difficult but recently since this government came in, he stopped all that (*Practitioner government setting*).

Because children in nursery and primary schools paid tuition fees and a host of other levies prior to the coming of the government in power at the time of this study, parents were quite pleased and satisfied with not having to pay fees even when most settings lacked the most basic facilities for children's learning.

Availability of double shifts in few state schools, as part of the entitlement delivered to children and families

Interviewees commented on and expressed satisfaction with the provision within the state school system, that enabled parents who wished to keep their children for longer hours (full day) in school by participating in both morning and afternoon sessions throughout the week, to do so without paying any fee if they were registered for both sessions. It was common to find few settings that encouraged double shifts managed by different groups of teachers and head teachers:

We run shift here. We have the afternoon shift. The afternoon shift they come by that 12:45 do their assembly that time and start off their own programme and end by 5.30P.M Er some of them that wants a longer period what they do now is to enrol their child in that afternoon shift so that when we dismiss by 12:45, their child will still joined those in the afternoon to close by 5:30, and afternoon yes based on parents wish. Some of them will like take their child by that 12:45 ok but if they still want their child to continue with the afternoon shift they are free so they will go and enrol their child in the afternoon shift so that after the morning session the afternoon shift will still accommodate them (*Teacher in government setting*).

After the normal school days, they will now enter another session. Afternoon session. That one will now lead them till 5 P.M everyday from Monday till Friday. It enable them to gain more knowledge of what education is all about because the time they use to play at home they now use it to invest in the school to learn more (*Parent in government setting*).

Teachers confirmed that not all settings had this provision for long hours or full day therefore entitlement for childcare in settings without such provision was limited to five hours (8 A. M. – 1P. M.) per day for children between 3-5 years old only. However, parents had the option of going outside the child's immediate setting to source for longer services.

Wide differences exist between government funded and private early childhood provisions

Examining government support further, interviewees revealed that provision was neither equitably distributed in early years settings nor equally accessed by all children between ages birth-five. A proprietor spoke clearly about the imposition of taxes and levies instead of the provision of grants and support systems for children and families in private settings:

Taxes, they tax us on every day they call on everything we do, they term it err renewal fee, this one fee, they charge you for nursery school, they charge you for primary school, they charge you for high school they even charge you for crèche. Ordinary school sign board they charge us for it. Nothing, nothing from the government. No, none, none, none. We've never had any. Rather they charge us. We pay as much as ermm four hundred thousand naira to the government every year (*Proprietor in private setting*).

Parents equally revealed that children in private schools were excluded from all forms of government support including the supply of free books, shoes, funding, furniture and other resources provided for state settings (primary classes only). This suggests that the burden of providing education and care for such groups was solely the responsibility of parents. This is a sharp contrast in comparison with the experiences of the interviewees in state schools who benefited from free education as reported in the texts below:

For this school, ermm it is government now. Yeah, Er yes it is just since 2011 I can say because I heard when some money was given to the HM's of each school to put the school where they are in order. I think some money was given to them, I think, I don't know whether it was 300,000.00 naira or more than that I don't know, actually I don't know but something of such was given to fund this school. Yes some of our chairs that are not in order they use it to repair them, close the windows that are not in order, erhen buying blackboards and other things we don't have or school is lacking, you know equipment for our cultural dances, we got all those things, We bought wrapper for when we want to go out for competition or so we wear our school uniform buy chalk and other things (*Teacher in government setting*).

Ermm in terms of cost in this school because it's a government school the cost is quite subsidized now. Most of the, most of the things are being provided by the government (*Parent in government setting*).

Regardless of the government's commitment to free tuition and furniture, a majority of parents and teachers in the government funded case study settings indicated that children in early years education were excluded from free resources such as books, socks, shoes, and other resources available to those in the primary classes thus raising concerns about equity and exclusion in ECE:

Ehh our governor provided free shoes, school uniform, money (to children in primary school) so why are the nursery session, that's the birth-fives, why are they not part of that thing? We don't have. We asked about the shoe they said the size, they don't have the size of the nursery session but they will still bring the size ehh heh. Well we didn't see any uniform if they bring they say it's for boys and not for girls. The school uniform is in the office but they said it's for boys and not for girls. Eh heh that's what we have been passing through now that's the problem we are having. They will provide for boys and not for girls, then they pay for primary one to secondary session, the nursery are not included (*Parent in government setting*).

Specifically, teachers reported shortfalls in the actual number of learning materials supplied, suggesting that it was barely enough for all the children enrolled in primary schools. They confirmed that children in ECE were excluded from the supply of books and other learning materials:

He has been providing but the one he has been providing is not enough, even though to come to the level of the nursery (*Teacher in government setting*).

The government provides learning materials. The government provides books sometimes. The book is not enough. It's very insufficient, they are supposed to have, all of them, but there are very few, it's about ten for about fifty four children (*Teacher in government setting*).

Inequitable access and exclusion of disadvantaged, disabled children and those with learning difficulties in early years settings

On the issues of access and inclusion, the teachers interviewed confirmed that access did not exist for disadvantaged children with special educational needs (SEN) in any of the case study settings. Although the guidelines for early years education in Nigeria recommended the screening of children at intake and periodically to detect any special needs, and providing requisite facilities to assist

children with special needs to ensure full participation of physically challenged children in learning activities and appropriate referral when necessary (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005). This study revealed that this was not implemented in any of the settings visited and children with special needs were not even admitted in main stream schools in the first instance. Some interviewees believed that the situation was worse for disadvantaged children in rural areas which were known for poor resources. A proprietor in one of the private settings within the metropolis discussed her experiences and voiced concern about the lack of opportunity she observed, for poor disadvantaged children in the rural areas she visited frequently, and her effort in relation to addressing inequality and lack of access that exists for some children in ECE in Owerri:

I was planning to embark on ehh what I call ermm adopt a school program because when I go to the villages for meetings or visit and all that, I see children who are supposed to be engineers, doctors, you see the attributes in them but you know that as far as they remain there, there's no way they're gonna be what they're supposed to be so ah in my little capacity I pick one or two of them, bring them to school you know, give them uniforms, give them textbooks, and then they go to school free of charge. But that's the much I can do because ermm I can't bring everybody here we need money to run the school as well so we just try our little best but the fee now is high for the common man in the village (*Proprietor*).

Other participants also expressed concern about the poor state of infrastructures in government settings in rural areas for instance a parent in one of the government revealed that:

Some of the schools in the villages you will see them. They have just a mud house there. Most of them no windows, nothing, nothing and you hardly believe this is a school environment but this administration now has come in and bring changes in the school so I believe if they will have this spirit all the schools will change and there will be quality education for the pupils inside the school (*Parent in government setting*).

Teachers confirmed the lack of resources and personnel for the education and care of children with SEN. For instance in responding to the question on inclusion of children in main stream settings, teachers in all six government settings in this study were explicit with regard to the lack of provision of any sort for children with special needs in private and public settings in this study. They equally noted that no teacher had qualification in special education. The only proprietor who

had a first degree in special education did not admit children with SEN. The excerpt below highlights the challenges she encountered:

Erm it's my area. I studied err special education in my first degree. I once tried it but it didn't really work because of the facilities we have. Because err we needed those classrooms for because ou like eh we had an eh autistic child who was sort of violent and ehh a nine year old, couldn't even dress himself up and all that you know very, very prone to destroying things and all that so I tried to, we have to keep such a child in one room with the teacher and an assistant everyday but it wasn't working because we if we charge the parents for that, it's not gonna be easy for them to pay so we kind of stopped. ...Yes of the children because we are we're aware of the fact that we have eeh eh you know visual learners, auditory learners, kinaesthetic learning, and like in the schools in Nigeria we don't have facilities to change, to check, to determine who is who so we try to ehh make sure that we put in all those areas, kinaesthetic (*Proprietor*).

Other participants interviewed equally confirmed that there was a special school exclusively for SEN in Owerri:

No provision for that in line in respect of their line. You know those people need special equipment for their learning. We don't have those equipment here. The deaf, we don't have somebody who's trained to speak to them, we don't have such teachers here and ehh what of the dumb one or the blind, there's nothing like those things they use to make their learning possible for them. That's why we don't admit them here (*Teacher in government setting*).

We don't. There's a school for that. A nearby school. There's a school for special children (*Teacher in government setting*).

No provision for children with special needs. No there is none. They have special school. Yes in Imo state because the disability children have their own school. Well like that depends on the administration of the HM. If she admits and brings to you erhen. We don't and I do not have anyone in my own class (*Teacher in government setting*)

Absence of provision for birth-three year-olds in government settings forces families to rely on private for profit child care markets

Beyond the limited opportunities for poor disadvantaged children, parents and practitioners in government settings reported the lack of provision for children under the age of 3. This is despite the guideline for early years learning and policy statement in the revised National Policy on

Education suggesting that the new framework catered for children between birth-five years. When asked what age group were admitted in each setting, similar responses were given by the interviewees. These excerpts from interview data, clearly revealed the exclusion of children under 3 years old in government settings in Owerri:

The nursery is from 3 years, we admit from three years four years because if we admit from three years after one year they go to nursery 2 which is age of four years. After nursery 2 we go to nursery 3 which is at age of five years. At nursery 3 for them to go to primary 1 at age of 6 years that is it (*Teacher in government setting*).

No the government has not given us that ehh leverage for now. That's the, if we must admit them we will need caregivers, we will need not only classroom now we will need rooms that will be you know made very well as a home for their up keep. Since we don't have that facility that is why we have not introduced that ehh crèche education into the system. We admit from two and half years to five and half years. Those are the people we expect to be from nursery one, two and three (*Teacher in government setting*).

Some teachers in state schools gave their views and justification for not admitting children under the age of 3 in government settings in Owerri, especially when asked if failure to admit them did not amount to exclusion:

We are not excluding them (Under 3s) because they are too young to handle as a teacher. Can you carry them? Some of them shit in the class so that is why. Those that are 3 years they can talk say I want to drink water, I want to urinate, I want to do this I want to do that but those before 3 years, some of them cannot talk. Yes he is beginning to learn at the house, the mother... he learns from the mother. He talks, he says I want to urinate, the mother will teach him this is how to, I want to drink water, I want to do this and from there he will learn from the mother then when he comes to school he will just open his mouth and talks not say do you want to drink? Do you want to eat? [Teacher makes a shiii sound with her mouth] he will just keep quiet (*Teacher in government setting*).

No they should go home with their babies. We have not accepted such in this school. We have not accepted such ages. One, there is no provision for such ages, you know such ages their provision is too much so before one admits such ages, you must have those provisions, enhance even the teachers and whoever will take responsibility of such ages (*Teacher in government setting*).

Interviewees in two private settings indicated the group of children enrolled for education and care at their centres:

We have erm pupils from at least from six months of age for the crèche. Once the child is six months we admit them, for our toddler group those of them that are one plus. Then we ah we also have another group, explorers, before the pre-school proper (*Teacher in private setting*).

We do, depends on the arrangement between them and the parents and ehh the director. Yes we have. If there's even we have suckling. Sometimes we do because ehh maybe the condition of the mother's job, they'll bring but the child will grow from here, walk from here, grow from here. We have one, the child is now in pre-school, she's two years now. I think either six months, seven months something like that. From here she grew up she walked, so she was the baby of the school. Everybody will like to carry (*Teacher in private setting*.)

Certainly, the real life experiences of stakeholders gathered through interviews and observations carried out in case study settings highlighted the gap between policy and practice in ECE in Nigeria. Changing family structures and its impact on the demand and supply of childcare services, meant many parents in employment and businesses resorted to the only existing provision for this group under private for profit providers who are known to charge high fees that effectively exclude low income families.

6.10 Quality concerns in children's learning centres

General dissatisfaction with the state of resources in children's learning environment

Another theme that emerged in the data analysis was children's learning environment and resources in the case study settings. Resources within the context of this analysis refers to infrastructures and facilities such as water and electricity supply, play facilities, toilet and sanitation in settings, learning materials and classroom spaces. The United Nations (1989: 2) recommended that all state parties 'ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision'. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) set out the National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres with the aim of providing standardized and quality education and care for children and the curriculum emphasised play-based environment with a

focus on child stimulation through relevant educational materials and toys, to be provided at the home and community levels (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007). This section of the analysis focused on parents' and teachers' perceptions of the resources and facilities in their children's learning environment which is considered an important element of quality in ECE. Both indoor and outdoor facilities were explored using a checklist and against the standard set by NERDC

Sharp contrasts exist between the provision in all state funded and three private settings in this study. Indeed, they do not fit into Woodhead's description of being 'blessed with an indulgent wealth of manufactured games and equipment (furniture, domestic appliances, TV, video, computers, toys, puzzles, paper, paints, books, etc.)', rather, 'most make do with minimal resources, and many with virtually nothing at all' (Woodhead, 1996:30). My observations showed that whereas the learning environment in seven of the settings (one private and six government funded) did not meet the minimum standard set by NERDC in specific areas, two private settings differed significantly from the other seven case study settings in terms of facilities. One of the two well-resourced settings had limited outdoor and small classroom spaces that did not meet the stipulated standard of (16 square meters) for 20-25 children. Nevertheless, the classes had fewer children. To a very large extent, both settings met the recommendations of NERDC in terms of environmental sanitation, fencing, play areas and facilities for children, water and electricity supply, sanitation, health and safety standards and adult child ratios. Classes were well ventilated and both settings had sufficient child sized tables and chairs, security, instructional materials, children's works, colourful charts and posters displayed on walls, construction blocks, musical instruments, art work materials such as paint and paint brushes, poster colours, crayons were made available to children. These settings had well-arranged shelves with children's story books and work materials neatly arranged. Nursery classes had soft and hard toys, beds and mattresses as can be seen in the pictures below.

This image of ECE learning environments is a sharp contrast when compared with other case study settings. Based on the observations carried out and interviews conducted with participants, it was

clear that learning environments and facilities in the remaining seven case study settings did not meet the recommended minimum standards for early years education with respect to learning materials, group sizes, adult child ratios, water and electricity supply, play facilities, toilet facilities, sanitation and safety for children. Most settings had overcrowded classes, potholes or broken floors, leaking roofs, and they lacked ceilings, windows and doors which all had significant effects on children during cold, hot or wet weather. Group sizes were so large that it did not enable effective interaction and movement between teachers and children. Describing how challenging the situation in overcrowded was, teachers had this to say:

We are three in one class, three classes in one, we don't have adequate...., ha! We used to suffer there; even ventilation, everywhere will be hot, you will be fanning yourself. We don't have adequate movement. That is, we are jam-packed! It's not, it's not the, the condition is not warm; I don't know whether they know there's no adequate classroom for this (*Teacher in government setting*).

Space is not enough for them. They cannot move. I cannot go into the classroom to look after them. The space is too small. The space has been like this. We've been sharing including this class, yes because it's tight (*Teacher in government setting*).

Some parents detailed their children's experiences in settings during sleep or play time: They don't have anywhere to sleep o! Unless they will lay their heads on their table or their desks they don't have anywhere to sleep. No space in the class it is very full (*Parent in government setting*).

The only thing I, I think ehh is just the space. but they have a permanent site that they're planning on moving to it will make it extremely perfect because children need a larger play space to play I I've come here at times where they have to do like sports and all of that they have to break the kids into classes into groups because the space, the environment is not big enough to carry them but it would, it would, a child would want to probably be on the playground when even if it's primary 1A, they'll like to be on the playground when someone in primary six is also on the playground playing because the interaction would ermm help them learn a lot from err students that are not in their class so I think the thing err, if they can move while I'm still here, to their permanent site it would be a good thing to do (*Parent in private setting*).

No they don't have toys and they don't even have mats, mats for them. They used to bend down their head, like in those my children's class, if they want to sleep they will bend their heads on the chair so no mat (*Parent in government setting*).

Evidently the learning environment in some settings did not meet the National minimum standard for early child care centres which recommended that classrooms should be about (16 square meters) for 20-25 children, well ventilated with doors that allow for free movement, or flexible sitting arrangements that allow for interaction with other children. These settings do not meet the requirements of smooth plastered walls, non-leaking roofs of thatch, raffia or corrugated iron sheets. Nor do the settings meet the requirement of well illuminated rooms that enable children see clearly and corners for science, health and nutrition, drama, shopping, sleeping (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005).

General sense of dissatisfaction with the state of water and electricity supply

In two settings, there was a regular water supply from the boreholes which were in good working condition. Teachers and parents in both settings confirmed that:

It's very very okay because there is twenty four hours water (*Parent in private setting*).

Water, that is one thing. I'm very, very particular about, water. At home at home we, what we drink is bottled water, that's what we drink even though there's bore hole but that's what we drink so here they have err the dispensers, they sieve it and all that. When he resumed school I used to put one bottled water in his bag, and then they were like they said that he shouldn't be coming to school with water so I'm comfortable with the he has his cup that he uses to drink water (*Parent in private setting*).

There's no water provision from the government. Almost every house in Owerri sink borehole. If you must have water in your house, you sink borehole. If you must have water in the office you have to sink bore hole so we have a borehole here and we use we use for the toilet, use for washing, and then we buy bottled water for our water dispensers here for children to drink. Children are not allowed to bring in water. Once you're admitted into this school, we dedicate cup and cutlery to you because they have cubicles. So every child has a cubicle where he or she keeps his or her things so you just need to grab your cup and go to the dispenser to fetch water (*Proprietor*).

From the observations carried out and through the interviews with two parents it was confirmed that children were not allowed to bring water from their homes. The setting had water dispensers which was accessible to all of the children and teachers at different points starting from the reception to

the classrooms. One of the private and six of the state schools had challenges with water supply and teachers confirmed that they purchased water from water tankers that supplied water from time to time and boreholes around most settings. Teachers in the poorly resourced private setting confirmed that the water supplied by the tanker was not fit for drinking. All children in the seven settings brought water from their homes in bottles or plastic cans.

There was evidence of boreholes and water tanks in six government settings however, only two settings had water at the time this study was conducted. Parents and teachers in the affected schools complained about the distance between the early years classes and the source of water in some settings and how they went outside the school premises to fetch water from the boreholes. A parent who claimed her child was left unattended to said:

The water, the place that the water is, it was very far from the class and they don't have bucket. That's they don't have like all these bucket that you can use to go and fetch water from there and bring to that class so she finds it difficult to do all those things so she left my baby outside till when I came. I was asking her, she said that ehh they don't have water. They don't have water the children used to come with their own water at home. I went to the secondary section to use their own bucket and fetch water to come and wash my children. They don't have toilet because that's even why I have problem with the first aunty. The day that that my baby poo, there is no a water. I don't know how long but all I know is that I came in the afternoon, I saw her she too she said she had finished washing the classroom before I came that she used the little water they have in the class. So I have to go and fetch water outside and come. So that kind of a thing, I just ask that the government should help them, at least provide those buckets for them, enough ones, and ehh enough water. Water that will be closer the tap the tank is there, but the problem is connection to connect the water closer to where they are because it's closer to the secondary section but it's not closer to the nursery and the primary section (*Parent in government setting*).

Other parents and teachers also confirmed the lack of water in settings:

We don't have water supply in the school because the tap we have in the school, they are not functioning again so we don't have sufficient water supply though we get water around from people that have borehole (*Teacher in government setting*).

We don't have water but behind us, there is an Anglican Church, there is borehole, so we get some water from there. The children use to go there and get some water and we use to go there too (*Teacher in government school*).

We have the government installed bore hole in three areas. One at the front of the gate, one at the secondary school section, one at the back gate. They have installed the water. The problem now is the reticulation of the water. We need the water that is already here to be piped close to our classrooms. That is the reticulation. We need them to pipe them close to the classrooms so that when the children defecate or they soil themselves I will not have to hustle, running around looking for bucket to get water. That is the major problem that I have now (*Teacher in government setting*).

Generally, the electricity supply was a challenge in the whole of Owerri. Two private settings relied on generators:

We, we seldom have power supply from the government. We run generator almost twenty four hours every day. So you see us spending like eh in a month we spend up to one hundred thousand on diesel because diesel is also expensive in Nigeria so that's the way it is. And eh we have to we have to run the generator because the classrooms are air conditioned and the children have gotten used to it and e-e-it, it has to be on (*Proprietor*).

Electricity, it's okay because when the NEPA is off we have a standby generator (*Teacher in private setting*).

NEPA means National Electric Power Authority. This is a government agency charged with the responsibility of electricity supply in Nigeria. Availability or lack of electricity was dependent on the location of the setting. A good number of settings in this study were poorly illuminated. Participants in some of the government settings within the metropolis revealed that electricity was never installed in the schools while some teachers said they did not:

They have none here you can't see any electricity in this school they're supposed to have it because it's very good you can use it to teach children or do one computer or the other thing then you can still help the children and the teachers too and help the school so there's nothing like that (*Parent in government setting*).

Yes we have electricity. Even we do charge our phone, maybe if you come you want to charge anything your phone, your electrical gadgets, you come to school with them, you charge. There is electricity here (*Teacher in government setting*).

Here in our school, we don't have that privilege of having electricity in our school here but some schools if it is in the town, some of them have that facility but here we don't have it (*Teacher in government setting*).

That one is apology there is no electricity here. There is no nothing like that. The school was installed with one, but it has it has gone by eh hooligans (*Teacher in government setting*).

Dissatisfaction with the state of Learning Materials in children's centres

Teachers in this study were asked about the availability or lack of diverse learning materials such as tables, chairs, books, teaching aids such as charts and other materials required for the day to day teaching and learning in settings:

Nothing is provided for the children both textbooks for the child in primary even crayon, I provide everything. He comes and tells me mummy they asked us to bring crayon and other materials, I bring out money and buy it for him they do not provide anything for them. The people they provide books for are the ones in primary one. Like my child who is in primary two now, they gave him books, yes they gave him books (*Parent in government setting*).

They but they do, the government do provide textbooks to the students but I have not seen any textbooks to the nursery schools, ECC. Yes books for the primary but for ECC, I have not seen. Err I don't have as you're seeing me I don't have, I don't have ehh they do buy their own textbook. Their parents buy, we give them every Friday, weekend, home work to do at home then on Monday they will pass it and mark them for them. Mm parents provide textbooks for the children in ECC but in primary school the government provide textbooks because I have seen textbooks not for sale from the government to the primary schools and and I know that it will be the same thing in secondary schools (*Parent in government setting*).

Some of their teaching aids, it is we that also go and buy some of the teaching aids. We don't have teaching aids here. Some of the charts, some of the books we use for the children it is we that provide them. Yes because some of the nursery books the government didn't even give the headmistress as I was told. The nursery books it is we that go to the market and buy it make use of it even though some of the charts that you see here it is we that contributed money and go the market and hang them there and use them to teach the children. As I came here last year this is where we are so we don't know whether they use to provide them or not but as we come here, I didn't even meet any book or teaching aids here say this is the teaching aids provided by the government that we use them to teach the children. It is we that go the market, select the books,

select the charts, select some of the things, we buy them with our own money then we use it because if we are looking for the interest of the government we don't know whether they will provide or not provide. That is if we wait for them, we will not teach the children (*Teacher in government setting*).

General sense of dissatisfaction with the state of toilet facilities, poor hygiene and sanitation in settings

Observations of the facilities was carried out against the standard stipulated by NERDC. The requirements in toilet and sanitation as indicated in the minimum guidelines for early years centres stipulate that toilets should be available for caregivers/helpers and children with separate toilets for girls and boys, there should be sanitary facilities (each centre to have potties, and ventilated improved pit latrines), there should be proper refuse disposal and the provision of a hand wash basin with soap and water (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005). From my observation, toilet facilities in two private settings were neat and in good condition.

This was not the case in the other private setting and the six government centres. Sanitary conditions were very poor and toilet facilities were non-existent in some settings. Although there were boreholes in some of the settings, there was no running water because the boreholes had malfunctioned. For instance, two teachers in the private setting with about 68 children indicated that teachers and older children shared the toilet in the proprietor's house while the rest of the children used the only four toilet potties lined up under a tree close to the classes as seen below.

Teachers commented:

Only older children have access to water system located in proprietor's house; Little ones make use of 3 or 4 children's pole (toilet potty) (*Teacher in private setting*).

The director is living around the school, we make use of the director's own and the children they use this. We want to train them how to make use of the toilet facility. That's why we allow them to use it. After they finish, we go and spray. We are the one that will do it not them, as they are using it, we'll be cleaning it, disinfecting it, if the pole is full we now go and dispose it then we wash it (*Teacher in private setting*).

Two teachers in a government setting in a semi-urban area expressed dissatisfaction with the use of pit toilet in their setting saying:

We have toilet facility but it's not err, err, it is not err what it is supposed to be. The era of using pit toilet has gone. The era of using pit toilet has gone. We are still using pit toilet as a toilet facility in this school (*Teacher in government setting*).

We have toilet here but it is a pit toilet and the state is not maybe, it is not good for teachers and the pupils. We are appealing for the WC. That one is not good for our health, we've not been using it, it's not been keeping, it is not in a good condition so we've not been using it (*Teacher in government setting*).

Parents and teachers in some settings within the metropolis complained that children came out to the open field, to an open space or nearby bushes to urinate or defecate. In the course of the interview in some settings without toilets, some children were actually seen running out of their classes into open spaces and nearby bushes to urinate in the full view of everyone while teachers in some other settings claimed they went behind the security post in the open. Participants had the following to say about the facilities:

Actually you know the toilet facilities they don't have any toilet. Ehh no bathroom where the children can easily go in and ease their self. They don't have any toilet and that is number one problem they're having. The only problem aah I, I think they're having is this toilet facilities they don't have it (*Teacher in government setting*).

He (*meaning her son*) used to tell me that mummy we don't have any toilet and bathroom, they only wee-wee around. If they want to pupoo kwanu, they will find somewhere and pupoo outside. That's the only thing (*Parent in government setting*).

The toilet is not enough it is just one. It is one toilet for the entire school not the nursery section only. We are up to 300-400 hundred pupils. So toilet facility is a problem (*Teacher in government setting*).

When I came I discovered they that they don't have convenient room that the convenient room are not yet prepared. Toilet and bathroom ehh, but now they're working on it. As I

said earlier, they're working on the toilet and bathroom so if we want to ease our self, we go outside either behind the security house or open space. We go there and ease our self or we beg them, they will allow us to go in there. We don't have any convenient room that one is a problem we're facing now. Open space and ease our self. What will I do? What will you do? Erhen You can't do anything now. You can't do anything. We have asked them. Their, they said they are working on it. Up till now they have not opened the place. Since October I came, I have not seen. Maybe it's been like this. The children, they ease their self. That's they urinate on the field we ask them to go to the field and ease their self! Arh-ha open space. They go to the field and ease their and wee-wee there. Poo, we ask them to go somewhere we use ehena, tissue and pack their shit. Ah hah. We pack the shit, the ECC children erhen. We pack their shit what will we do? We pack it inside the dustbin. We can't kill our self now. I don't know ooo mummy I don't know what we're going to do (interviewer laughs) so you people should help us (*Teacher in government setting*).

In settings without fences and security services many teachers complained that intruders and vandals often defecate and destroy school properties. For instance, a teacher clearly stated that:

We have no fence at the back, even in front. Err the youths, they are doing something (*Teacher in government setting*).

They used to come in here and destroy things; pollute everywhere with faeces and destroy doors, offices, to do away with school equipment's (*Teacher in government setting*).

Teachers in a number of settings consistently complained about the poor sanitary conditions in their settings and how it impacted them. Apart from the fear of outbreak of diseases, many claimed they never opened some of the classroom windows because of the stench in the setting. In this regard, all government settings and one private setting in this study did not meet the stipulated standard

General sense of dissatisfaction with the state of play facilities

The prescribed minimum standards for IECD implementation in Nigeria includes enough space for children to play (enough to take 20-25 children and two adults at a given time) and to be safe and secure. The standards indicate that a setting may have grass or sand but it should not be bushy or dirty, and should not be waterlogged. Conducting interviews with teachers and parents when school was in session created an opportunity to observe children both indoors and outdoors as they played

in different school settings. Observation revealed that in the environments that were well quipped, there were varied experiences in terms of play for children. In the poorly equipped settings, the children had no access to the most basic toys.

A proprietor explained why she made provisions for access to resources in her setting:

I'm passionate about that because I tell people that here we play seventy four seventy five percent, and then we study twenty five percent because for me, like ehh Maria Montessori said, aah eeh you can only get the child to learn if you put the learning into play. So we have more than we need. We have play facilities we have both indoor and outdoor. We have more than we need we even have some in packets you can see the ones that they supplied today so we don't joke with that at all yeah (*Proprietor in private setting*).

In the state schools visited, children were seen playing and running around with each other in excitement, some in twos and some as a group. For instance, a good number of boys played football while others took turns at rolling old car and bicycle tyres. Some interviewees thought that football fields, the only play areas for children in government settings, were bare and unattractive. A dissatisfied parent said:

The field ehh yeah see the playground here it's not that too it's not too ok it's not ok it's too rough it's supposed to be a standard err field for the school because look at the school there's no there's no grass there it's too sand, sand is everywhere and the field supposed to be a standard field. field so that if the children come and say oh daddy look at our field like now if you talk about field they know that that one is their field but it's not a real standard football field or any pitch too (*Parent in government setting*).

Observations and interviews confirmed that many settings lacked play equipment and play areas for children to play. A teacher who discussed the lack of designated or mapped out play areas for children in ECE in her setting said:

Well for ECC section there is no area of play facilities marked for them rather how they do this is if we want to play, they go outside, we rally round, we do certain sports, minor sports so that is how we normally do because there is. In ECC section, equipment ought to be provided (*Teacher in government setting*).

In ECC section, it was common to find children in ECE playing with older children in primary classes, something some parents and teachers considered problematic:

Actually the play facilities, I myself I have asked the teacher about it because they need something like all this watch arts play, they supposed to have their own playground not with the primary session Ehen. But as I told the aunty, I asked her and she told me that she have written all the list and transferred them to the headmistress so it's her duty to hand it over to the government (*Parent in government setting*).

We're facing many challenges. We're facing many, many challenges including play facilities because when they're on break, the secondary school people will be on, students will be on break so they will be going around together. At times they will hit them, they will cry so we're facing many challenges (*Teacher in government setting*).

Describing the play materials available to children and the types of activities children were engaged in, two teachers highlighted how children were engaged in play even without swing or other play materials:

Mainly they use to play football; they use to play with tyres, running. In door is mainly poem. When we are reciting poem, we demonstrate poems, which is the only thing we do (*Teacher in government setting*).

Interviewees confirmed that the very few balls and tyres children were seen with in most settings, were either purchased by teachers or were brought in by children from their homes. Parents and teachers expressed their displeasure about the lack of play areas and play facilities in state schools generally. In particular, one parent's perception of toys and play equipment for children was delimited to or synonymous with amusement parks or private settings. For this parent, toys and play materials were not a common feature in state schools:

Yes like in other private schools we have something like viewing. Go to amusement park you have what the children use to play but here is government school and I have not seen any government school where they have those things or maybe display them for the children to play but where you see them is in private schools because that one is private, the man in question handle his own institution the way he wants to have it and that is why their fees is are on the higher side too (*Parent in government setting*).

Rusty metals of what looked like the skeleton of swing and merry-go-round was seen in one of the settings an indication that some children would have had access to outdoor play equipment sometime in the past. Some participants confirmed that children's play equipment had become obsolete and was not replaced:

Well err I know that they have err play facilities here like this side they normally have something that use to look like janglover or whatever thing. I know that maybe those one have spoilt now or not. You see the skeleton of those things there now (*Parent in government setting*).

They do not have play facilities such as this one they call janglover, it is not here. You have seen it for yourself, there is nothing here (*Parent in government setting*).

They have gone out with time, they're old and many, many have been destroyed, in short, as of now we don't have them. Those things were provided. It is years back. No replacement. As of now, we don't have play materials for them (*Parent in government setting*).

We have no playing facilities here at all. We have none at all only ehh pole, this ehh football pole. We don't have anything like toys and all the rest of them; we lack those things only this little jangle-over here. No development (*Teacher in government setting*).

The state of play facilities in one of the private settings in this study was not too different from that of state schools described above. For instance, about five soft toys were hung on the wall, way out of the reach of the children. Although the proprietor claimed there were some other toys, throughout the period of the interviews, none was displayed for the children to play with. Generally speaking, this private setting had limited play materials and play areas. Apart from the two car tyres at the school site, the other outdoor play equipment was an improvised swing made of two sets of twine ropes hanging down a metal pole, into the holes drilled on the sides of two half cut plastic baby baths.

6.11 Disparities in Access to government's funding of early childhood education

Inconsistencies in Government funding and provision for children in private and public settings

Participants were asked their views on funding and maintenance of ECE settings and their experiences with respect to financing the education and care of children aged birth-five years. Two teachers explained that:

The state government funds, funds the education system in the state. Not the school. The government at the beginning of each session the government gives substantial amount to head teachers according to the population of the school like this school is thickly populated, maybe the woman might be getting up to three hundred thousand to maintain infrastructures here. If there's anything we need urgently that the government before the government could release, they should provide for us (*Teacher in government setting*).

Ok our funding comes from government. Government provides our needs they come from time to time to ask the things we need and they provide. Ee in a school year they, in a term they come every term anyway. They visit every term. They visit. The SUBEB will come, the local government will come education authority will come. They send their supervisors to come and monitor what is happening, know the things we need, they provide like now [pointing at some tables in a section of the school library] they have given us these round tables we are waiting for the chairs. If the chairs comes now we will set it up and the children will be using it (*Teacher in government setting*).

Note: SUBEB means State Universal Basic Education Board. It the government agency that coordinates Universal Basic Education (UBE) at the State level

There was no government support or provision whatsoever for all private ECE settings in Nigeria rather such settings were funded and maintained with levies and tuition fees paid by parents:

Nothing in private setting is free; Setting is funded with the tuition fees paid by parents; No grants from government or voluntary organizations. Parents pay for the books, for the furniture, the school provides it. Setting is not benefiting from free education and care (*Proprietor in private setting*).

While observing the facilities in the case study settings, there was evidence that the level of maintenance of each setting varied significantly. This reflected in the aesthetics and general outlook

of a number of state funded settings which lacked resources or learning materials for children when compared with the well-resourced private settings (all but one) and when measured against the minimum standard set by the government. In a majority of the state settings and one of the private setting, classes lacked windows and ceilings, roofs had holes and showed signs of leakages and most walls were dirty. Participants acknowledged that the federal and state government recently built or renovated at least one classroom block in each state primary school in Owerri. However, they were quick to note that they were assigned to upper primary classes and in some cases secondary schools especially in cases when all three share the same premises. Teachers highlighted the poor maintenance culture in many government settings. The general consensus was that settings were not adequately maintained for instance a teacher in one of the state schools noted that "the facilities are maintained by the government and it's maintained at their own time, a time most parents and teachers suggested was irregular.

Access to high quality ECE is limited by cost or affordability, availability and suitability

Regarding cost and affordability of ECE, participants revealed local variations depending on the choice of setting and the socio-economic background of the parents. Cost, to an extent, was influenced by the location of setting, availability or lack of resources, types of services provided and types of activities the children engaged in. Parents and teachers in government funded settings revealed that the education of children was free from nursery up until junior secondary school. This can be seen as one of the benefits of the declaration of Universal Basic Education. A parent who recalled the cost of education and care for his children prior to government involvement had this to say:

Er the people in secondary school pay ₦8,500.00 each one. Since they are three, check ₦8,500 into three. The people in primary use to charge us ₦1,500 or ₦2,000 then for the people in nursery they use to charge us ₦ 4,000. That is what we use to pay but now that no longer happens. It is completely free. No additional fee, handwork, no hidden fee what so ever (*Parent in government setting*).

Note: ₦ 8,500 is about £16 (British pound while ₦4,000 is about £8

I do not pay any tuition fee. It does not cost me anything. It is the err governor, the governor introduced free education. Do you understand? They have abolished hand work fee. Teachers no longer collect handwork fee since school fees became free. It was before that we use to pay for handwork. Then, there was no free education but now they have removed all those things (*Parent in government setting*).

No, nothing. No it's free education, nothing, even those in the secondary school (*Parent in government setting*).

All parents in two of the private settings indicated that they paid about ₦100, 000.00 (one hundred thousand Nigerian naira per term about £192.00 (British Pounds) at the current exchange rate.

It's not it's not cheap, It's not cheap but it's worth it. They vary. Err sometimes it goes above a hundred, and sometimes its emm eighty, eighty five, depending on the, the term but it's ermm I think it's worth it for what we are getting. It's really worth it (*Parent in private setting*).

Let's say per term, (pause) we're looking at an average of uhh say one hundred thousand, one hundred thousand which for some people, it all depends on what, what, what you're also looking at you know your disposable income. So all those kind of things inform. For me, it's not really a problem because my disposable income can carry what I'm actually spending in the school right now, and in addition, I'm also getting value for my money. So it's, it's a it would have been a different thing if I could afford it, but I don't have value or I can't afford it, and I can't even get there... so it's, it's actually something I can afford and I'm getting value (*Parent in private setting*).

The proprietor of the third private setting in this study which was located in semi-urban area said the fees were as follows:

Initial registration fee of ₦11,000 and subsequent fee of ₦5000 for all nursery classes. In crèche, they pay monthly but to start in crèche is six thousand ₦6,000, then monthly, they pay three-five. One of the cheapest around (*Proprietor in private setting*).

Note: 11,000 Nigerian naira is about £21; 5,000 is about £10 while 6,000 is about £11.50

Lack of choice for many low income families was quite evident in this study. Particularly, a good number of parents who could not afford the fees charged by the private sector, revealed that they turned to free government provision. This was irrespective of the quality it offered children:

The reason why I do not want to remove my children from here is since school is free education. Secondly I am a widow, I have nobody to assist me [voice begins to shake and she begins to weep] Will someone see where they attend school free of charge and then choose to ignore it or send them to where you will waste money? It does not make sense (*Parent in government setting*).

I had no money to register him. They told me it was free education so I then went and registered him and since then they have been teaching him. Er, there is no money to send them to private school (*Parent in government setting*).

Yes, and even the money Yes, the amount they are charged in private setting is very high so that is the reason for bring them to this setting (*Parent in government setting*).

Well before he came, we came to this place, we attend primary school at XXXX nursery and primary school, (private school), but due to finance then we have to choose this place (*Parent in government setting*).

Some middle income families interviewed emphasized that the quality of education their children received and types of activities children engaged in mattered. They saw a relationship between the quality of learning and the resources available in settings. Although some of the parents admitted that the fees charged was high, they found it affordable and were willing to provide the best education for their children irrespective of the cost. For instance, a parent said, "It's not it's not cheap, It's not cheap but it's worth it" another described the quality of education and care in his child's setting as "value for money," as in the following:

For my money here yes I'm getting the value because I'm seeing it in my child at least I don't have any cause to rush him to the hospital after school okay that he has cough, or rashes or something, I think health-wise I'm getting it. Then for the education, for the for his age, like really he's not supposed to be in school until he's three, but just that due to the kind of area, that's the environment we have and the educational set up now, we just have to start from the crèche so that he doesn't lack behind when he gets to two. So for the education I think he's coming up. He's learning how to talk while in school, I think I'm seeing I'm seeing the value of my money (*Parent in private setting*).

Some other parents who were satisfied said:

Yeah okay, naturally every parent want to give their children the best they can afford and emm and will I say I'm grateful that at least I can afford, God has made it possible for me to be able to afford here, so that's why I'm here it's not like I have anything against them it's just that I want good things for my child yeah and then I can afford it so here I am. Yes I think I am getting good value for money (*Parent in private setting*).

We are privileged to have the money so why not use it to like education it's better for me they're well learned than buying them so many things, this car, that one, that one. Yes investment is good but there's no investment that is greater than education. So I think no matter the amount, it's not really as long as you can comfortably afford it. So I don't think you should really frown at it. Because if you eventually come down to break it down, you will see that yes, they're worth it, the amount is just worth what your child is gaining here especially in this school, they take education and teaching as their priority. I know that if maybe am at advantage because I'm working here. Maybe if I'm not working here I'll be like aah this is too much. But I see what they do, so I know yes it's really worth it. The feeding fee is inclusive (*Parent in private setting*).

Defending the decision not to send children to a free government setting some parents summarized their thoughts as follows:

Not that I am claiming to be better or something but again when you look at it even in the in the provision of that free education per say you can't compare the quality. You can't just compare the quality as against what we have abroad where even the free schools are just as good as the private schools so maybe the private ones they just want to have that exclusive you know whatever and you know get their kids there. But here it's different. Here the education is free but the quality is so so appalling that you wouldn't want your child, if you have the means, to go through that because of course you have a standard you want for your kids, you know where they want them to go to, even probably eventually go abroad and all that to study for their university but that will I say (laughs)...it's not really needing support per say, but the government has just made it available (*Parent in Private Setting*).

I don't think I can actually do that send my children to government school in as much as they have qualified teachers more than most private schools eeh but they don't pay to me I that's how I feel they don't pay so much attention to the children and the population is much. There's no way they can give adequate attention to each child and that's what matters in education because my level of assimilating will not be the same with the other child and when you're just talking, and maybe thirty percent of the class are following, you feel that every other person are following. You'll see that even if the education is free, yet you've not achieved the aim for sending your child to school. So when private schools they have limited number in the class and they provide teachers that they have time here I'm talking with my experience here. They have time for each and every child, they your level of understanding, when others are done they still come back to you knowing that okay they still have to put more effort. Because I'm using my second son, his development was slow but they had time to like groom him and now he has picked

up. I'm so sure if had he been in government school nobody would have had such time for him. Ok imagine a class of fifty, hundred people who will come and be attending to your child personally (*Parent in Private Setting*).

Another parent referred to this own upbringing and education. He recalled the effort his parent made to provide him the best and his effort to provide the same quality of ECE for his son irrespective of the cost. He described the fees charged as "reasonable".

The price rate is, is, is a bit is ok. It's far lower than what we pay in the private school but for here, there's nothing like that. But in the public school you could find yes okay low cost but you cannot get that quality of education you want for your child so it's as good as thriving to put your child where you can get that quality of education. But I know for the public school yes the subsidy and what have you. Then, for the private sector you cannot get that. There is no way you can get that here. The free government school, the care is not there. The environment isn't okay at all. Though you will see the space because they have a criteria for their building, but the environment is not conducive, sometimes you might get to some schools, you hardly see seats for your baby, the teachers are nonchalant because depending on the kind of money they receive they are not well paid and so due to the economy of the country life is hard. So some of them put the whole, come to school with the whole blame on the child. So the care, the education, even the sound education they don't give because they use most of their time thinking of how they can take care of their own family at home, how they can do other things extra to earn more money. So the care is not there and the education is really not sound (*Parents in Private Setting*).

6.12 Parental involvement and effective partnership in setting, as an opportunity for improving children's learning and achievement

Parents expression of high levels of satisfaction with their relationship and quality of ECE services in settings

In exploring the issue of partnerships and relationships, this analysis focused on school partnership with families as well as teacher-pupil relationships. Many participants expressed satisfaction with the relationship that existed between them and the setting their children attended. They described it as one that enabled easy access to the setting, created a forum to freely raise issues or concerns, or to offer suggestions and resolve problems jointly. Expressions and phrases such as "cordial relationship"; "I love his aunty"; "it's a good one"; "my relationship with them is very good";

"Wonderful relationship"; "The relationship is okay; Very, very okay"; "It's cool" and "they are lovely" were used to describe the way they felt and parents' level of satisfaction. A parent who likened it to being part of one family said:

The relationship is okay. Very, very okay. The proprietor ehh operates an open door policy, you're free to come and tell her your views, make suggestions and all that. So it's been ehh very, very ehh. ehh it's been a wonderful relationship in the sense that you know we've been able to express even when we feel she's not done well, or we feel she's not done something right, or we feel there's something that has to improve in the school and all that, we tell her and she actually gives us that ehh listening ear so that's one thing I like about I'm even in fact we have a very, very wonderful relationship with her and the teachers as well. That ah sometimes it's like you know, a family. We're like a family as if you know it's a collective thing and it's, it's as if, if umm the school does well, I also do well, and I actually go out of my way most times to even advertise the school (*Parent in private setting*).

Other parents and practitioners also commented on positive relationships:

Cordial relationship, Wonderful relationship. Very cordial relationship that goes beyond, to both parties discussing personal problem. Very cordial and it goes beyond like I have had ermm cases where I had to talk with the proprietress on err certain issues, relationship based problems and all that, I didn't even have to, I think she observed that there's some challenges I was going through (*Parent in private setting*).

Well, it's I should say it's a good one, because most of the teachers here knows me, they know my children, they so it makes me feel like it makes me feel see. I, I feel the security because they know them, I when I come they say 'aah Mummy Joy, Mummy Isaac', everybody I relate with most of the teachers so I think. Yes there's a cordial, there's a family thing (*Parents in government setting*).

We do keep in touch like when there is any matter, any crucial matter we need to let them know about, we do invite them also; we don't normally invite them to come; rather we let them know maybe through invitation, written note to let them know things like this (*Teacher in government school*).

Interviewees constantly made reference to the role of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) in fostering partnership with schools in Owerri. The PTA was designed to give stakeholders a 'voice' in the education and care of children. It was often viewed or identified as a crucial forum for bringing families and schools together. One father who attended one of the case study settings as a

child growing up, recalled how his own parents participated in PTA meetings in his time. It is important to note that government abolished PTA in state funded settings as at the time this study was carried out:

I think we're hoping to see when there will be such meetings. Yes such forums where you can actually pour out your heart (*Parent in private setting*).

I have good relation with them. I know their teacher, I know her by name and she knows me. She knows my wife so in any problem, she still let me know and in case I ask her if there is any problem, she will still let me know so that I will not be ignorance of it so I am very, very good with the teacher and the entire school which is my school. It is the school that brought me up. As a parent here, sometimes there is something they do call Parents Teachers Association so when I was attending here, sometimes I do call my parents and they would come. You understand, so I believe that as my children this is their first term here, I believe that the association will still be on because it is in that association that you agree, disagree, talk things about how the school, how to help the government. So I believe that so far my kids are here, I don't have doubt, am fully involved (*Parent in government setting*).

As at the time this study was conducted, the PTA had been abolished in all government settings in Owerri by the government in power. Parents interviewed in the state schools suggested that it was in the spirit of free education. While some parents were pleased with the government's decision on the PTA because they claimed it eliminated all forms of levies or extortion that imposed burden on families who were solely responsible for the funding and education of children prior to the declaration of Universal Basic Education (UBE), some others felt that they lost the forum or platform for speaking up in children's learning. The following excerpts provides insight into stakeholders' perceptions of the functions of PTA:

Before government came in, we were having meetings with the teachers, knowing the problems you know, emanating from the school and how our children are performing in the school and also some of the problems the school is encountering so whenever the teachers call us for a meeting, we will now attend the meeting being the parents to see either one way or the other, if there is any problem, how we can solve it alongside with the teachers. At times like when there are lack of some amenities here, they invite us to come and see what they are lacking in the school and we only tell them that it is better we now ask government to provide it (*Parent in government setting*).

Recently there hasn't been much meeting because previously when the children were being charged a token as school fees and supportive levy, education levy, that was the time the parents were always around to agitate, to make sure that the fees were not too much were not charged too much. But now that the government has taken the sole responsibility of providing all everything the children need, the PTA often comes when invited so (*Teacher government setting*).

In the past we had PTA. We had PTA and when we need them, we call them, we invite them to the PTA meeting, discuss with them, chat with them to help us to solve problems but since we have this community government something, err the PTA is no longer functioning (*Teacher government setting*).

Before the administration we use to have PTA meetings but since the present administration, he banned anything pertaining PTA so the headmistress and the teachers they are the only people that can say (*Teacher in government setting*).

To an extent, government involvement could be viewed as a barrier between parents' and teachers' relationships in state funded settings. Albeit not explicitly stated, banning the PTA moved parents from being active participants, to invisible voices with diminished roles in state funded settings. There was evidence however, that the PTA continued to play pivotal roles in private early years settings in this study. A teacher in one of the state funded settings described the extent parents had distanced themselves in the provision for children rather than being active players or participants alongside whatever role government chose to play:

The parents are not even worthy what they want is for their children to learn and go. Any activities they are not. If you even call them, they say Rochas is there. Everything Rochas will do so they are not even interested in whatever. What they want their children to do is to learn and come back to the house. Everything. Even though some of them don't buy books. Some of them are waiting for Rochas. When you ask them they will say Rochas said he will provide this, provide that. He has been providing but the one he has been providing is not enough, even though to come to the level of the nursery. He has been providing for primary schools. He will provide bags, he will provide that. It is Rochas that provided these chairs that you see. It's them SUBEB. They provide the seats. But for the parents to put their own just help us and provide some of them, they will just look at the governor for him to provide everything (*Teacher in state setting*).

Note: *Rochas was the governor of Imo State as at the time this study was carried out.*

Family/school partnerships were viewed by participants in this study from the point of view that schools and families were co-partners in the upbringing, discipline and all round development of children. There was a sense of shared responsibility and mutual trust as they worked together to provide quality education and care for their children. Therefore, in response to the question - *Do you have a say in how your child is disciplined, or is it entirely up to the school and teacher?* A good number of parents echoed a cultural view or belief that a child belonged to the community as such his discipline and upbringing should be a joint responsibility:

It is necessary for the teacher to discipline a child when he goes wrong. It is necessary. I cannot ask a teacher not discipline my child when he goes wrong or question why my child is being flogged. It is not good like that because a child belongs to the community or society and not just me. If they train him well, it is to your own advantage so I am not the type of woman who would prepare for a fight with the school because a teacher flogged my child. Don't you see it is not good, it is not necessary. When a child goes wrong, he should be disciplined in any way the setting and teachers deem appropriate. That would enable the child know that what he has done is wrong (*Parent in government setting*).

For a teacher to discipline your child, he can't eeh she or he can't just discipline a child without a cause. So me being a parent, coming to tell a teacher ehh teacher why did you discipline my child or what, it doesn't show anything then I have to keep the child at home, you know? So I feel I have a right and the teacher also have a right because the training is for everybody. A teacher can train a child, any every individual can train a child because a child is not meant for the parents alone. It's a societal something. A child is a child of society, not only for the parents, yes (*Parent in government setting*).

It's a fifty-fifty thing. The, the parents must be involved. In as much as the school will try to do their best, but I think even the onus lies more on the parents who will you know definitely enforce some of these things like the school kind of like emm the it's like doing the planting, then the parent is like you know the person that will water the plants to help it now germinate so but e-e-e-e without the other you know you can't, you can't do without the you know, each other. The school cannot do without the parent, the parents cannot do without the school/. It's a symbiotic relationship in the sense that I would have to be involved in the child's umm upbringing and all that but somehow along the line still lies more on the parents, not necessarily the school, it's still more on the parents (*Parent in private setting*).

Two parents who were particularly impressed with the policies on discipline in two of the private case study settings said:

The school is quite strict with eemeeh punctuality to school so eeh at a certain time, eeh seven fifteen or there about no seven forty five or there about the gate is closed to students. If your child has to come late to school you have to call in first to say his going to be or she's going to be a little bit late because if you don't do that and you have the permission for that if he gets here when the gate is closed he can't have he or she can't have access to the school which is eeh a good thing. Most parents are irresponsible sometimes and in a ss. ss in a society like ours, anybody can come and pick your child away from school if you leave him or her there for too long so that's one other policy that I love so much about the school, and there's a fine of eeh I think, one thousand or there about (*Parent in private setting*).

Here in school when they are late their teachers will flog them very well. I didn't mind so I normally bring them here early. If you're late in the school they will flog you, discipline you (*Parent in government setting*).

Parents belief in their voices, equal rights and responsibilities for their children's education and discipline

Another dimension of the family/school partnership highlighted by interviewees was from the point of view of "being involved", having a "say", a "voice" or a "right" in their children's learning or in the settings they attended. In the course of the interviews, parents were asked how they felt about their ability to be involved with their child's education. In response to these questions, all parents in this study said they felt involved and had right in their children's learning experiences and development particularly by the supporting roles they played in their daily activities and in the delivery of ECE. Parents in some private settings who claimed private settings were allowed to organize PTA meetings talked about their involvement in different areas. For instance, activities such as organizing school excursions, participation in end of term or year activities, and Christmas activities occurred within the PTA. Other forms of involvement were supporting children's learning, supervising their homework or assignments, participating in school inter-house sports and sharing information about the child. Some parents said:

Yes, they do the last time they had end of year party, I mean the school, they invited all parents whose children attend school here. We all came and sat down and watched as our children sang, danced, recited poems and other things. They invite us to different

activities. I was very pleased because my daughter is very intelligent and when she was attending this school, she was among the children that were brought out to perform in school activities (*Parent in government setting*).

Like if my child misbehaves, they invite me to come and see, when he behaves well, like now they want to vacate for this term, he usually come first so when he comes first, they usually give him a little prize. He never misses that first position; he maintains first position every time. Yes, they do the last time they had end of year party, I mean the school, they invited all parents whose children attend school here (*Parent in government setting*).

I had complained about eeh the rate at which they come home with home homework like every day they come home with. I have to sit down and do the homework with, with him, and, and I'm like ha! he a child comes home with homework every day, what time do you now have to either teach the child something new because what he's coming home with is the same thing from the school and all of that. Weekends it's the same thing even on holidays as they go on holidays they give them holiday projects to, to do um at a point I now realized that it was it was a good thing because the homework helps them remember at home what they have learnt earlier on in the day so instead of coming home to play away the time, it helps them to revise, refresh their memory, and prepare themselves for school the next day ehh that was the explanation that I got [*laughs*] cos I'm like it's too much I mean they don't have time to do any other thing apart from this one and all that (*Parent in private setting*).

Very, very involved. I have them three here, two boys one girl so am 100% involved. I have the right not even privilege, I have the right The only thing is ermm it has to be formal form you know like I have, you have times where like I do that a lot if I come to school, I see his class teacher, how's he doing today? How has he been doing, and all of that you know they, they tell you exactly how your child is doing, and err er the challenges that the child is facing at that particular time arr so you have that and then the proprietress of the school she has an open-door policy. Most times, the report comes to her directly if your child is not doing well like when he was having difficulties with adjusting, eeh I used to be called upon like he's smart, he's this, he can read, he can do that, but translating it into paper is a problem because he's being distracted, so I will come here, she'll tell me these are the complains teachers are giving about your son, this is what you should do at home to help us balance off (*Parent in private setting*).

These levels of involvement created opportunities for parents and teachers to monitor and discuss children's progress and identify challenges. It equally fostered closeness to teachers as they jointly worked together to provide quality service for the child. Unanimously parents indicated that they

had rights in the settings their children attended. However, many parents interpreted their rights differently as can be seen in these remarks by some parents:

I have the rights yes because I have the right to tell them or to correct them in a way my child is not co eh playing going along with them. I have the right to say what I want my child to do and what I don't want because they can't tell my child now to sit on the floor while our able governor provided chair and desk I have the right to come and say for the sake of my child's eh (*Parents in government setting*).

If at all there's something that I find that that is not going on, I have every right to complain, I have every right to lay the complaint to the teacher. Even if the teacher is not giving me the adequate whatever I need, I still have to go to the principal or the headmistress (*Parents in government setting*).

Anywhere one's child attends you have right so I have right because if he does well and is useful, it is good for you and if he brings problem at least they will contact you about what he has done so I have right here (*Parents in government setting*).

This research revealed that the voices of some parents in state schools in the study were diminished despite these claims of having a voice, a say, or a right to speak up when their wishes were not met or whenever they were not satisfied with the conditions under which settings provided education and care for children. There was a culture of keeping silent or mute even in the face of obvious dissatisfaction, poor facilities, and lack of resources in children's learning environments as seen in this study. Findings indicated that for different reasons, most parents were unable to communicate their reservations or concerns. When I probed to understand why parents failed to exercise their rights or raise their voices, one parent who considered it the responsibility of teachers to complain to the government said:

I have never come to complain like that. No, you know like these teachers are here now, these things are in their hands. Whatever they need as teachers who teach in this setting, it is their responsibility to inform the government about what they do not have here, to say, see we do not have water here, we do not have electricity, children do not have toilet. It is their responsibility to inform the government (*Parent in government setting*).

Another parent suggested that she had no idea she could complain:

Since I have the idea that I have to talk about providing the facility, playing facility for the children, I think the next thing to do now is to take a step, then also concerning the toilet or bathroom issue ehh you still have to take a step maybe telling them about it to know what they can do. Because we've not come in contact with them to know what is in their own mind (*Parent in government setting*).

A parent who claimed that she would have loved to complain under confidential cover because she was not sure of how the setting would respond, said the lack of suggestion box for parents to drop their complaints without being noticed prevented her from doing so:

I don't think they will respond, because as I have looked around now, I don't see anything like, where they write their privacy. I don't have (*Parent in government setting*)

Teacher/pupil relations was another issue that emerged in this study. Both teachers and parents valued the relationship that existed. A teacher in one of the case study settings who described the relationship between her and the children she cared for and how it made her feel said:

I manage them very well and listen to them one on one we speak one on one when you see us, you can't even imagine you'll just think they're my children my biological children because they're free to tell me their mind (*Teacher in private setting*).

Many parents equally expressed the view that their children had good relationship with their teachers. Some drew their conclusions based on personal experiences which included the nurturing and care they felt the teachers provided and level of changes or improvement observed in the children. Parents described the "connection", "relationship", "bonding" "closeness" and "caring supportive relationship" between the teachers and children. Those who made positive comments expressing satisfaction had the following remarks:

She's even so close to her teacher, she there's nothing she doesn't discuss with the teacher. Funny enough everything that happens in the house, the following morning she comes to school and she's like ooh Ms X, see what happened today at home see what happened at home, this that. It's so bad even when we're travelling she will tell me she knows that we are travelling so they're very, very close (*Parent in private setting*).

Yes the teachers, they always embrace their teachers. Both the morning people and afternoon people. Even self they have more cordial relationship and good harmony with afternoon shift more than the morning. Am not saying that the morning people are not caring, they are also caring, they are also care for them (*Parent in government setting*).

I think they do get on well with their teachers considering what they tell me at home when they come back from school, so I think they get on well with their teachers. I, I also enjoy the school. I think probably due to the kind of teacher he has I think he has great teachers that care much as in just like his own mum. I think he enjoys the school. Yes, he enjoys the school (*Parent in government setting*).

Parents' perceptions of teachers' qualification and quality in provision

Although none of the teachers in this study had qualifications in ECE, all parents interviewed suggested that teachers in both state and private funded settings their children attended were very qualified. Most parents were appreciative of the teachers and they expressed gratitude and satisfaction for the services and care rendered to children. For instance, some parents said:

Yes. The teachers are very good. With her status now, the way she is now is okay. They're giving her what she needs because as she's taking she continue growing (*Parent in government setting*).

Teacher is handling her very well; she gets on very well with her teachers; the teachers are really trying; education is going very well here (*Parent in government setting*).

Yes the teachers, they always embrace their teachers. Both the morning people and afternoon people. Even self they have more cordial relationship and good harmony with afternoon shift more than the morning. Am not saying that the morning people are not caring, they are also caring, they are also care for them (*Parent in government setting*).

It's good; They are getting on well; They are getting well, well, well their getting it; I love all of them because the way they do take care of the children they are very, very decent people; they look at the children they are very neat (*Parent in government setting*).

For some parents, their choice of setting was informed by the presence of qualified staff. Three parents in this study said:

The teachers are doing very fine. Our governor he tried and put all his efforts in this township school because this is where he campaigned, and he's doing very fine in this township school so he brought qualified teachers, they're teaching very well, so that's why I choose the school because I love the school very much and if you look around, the environment everywhere is neat so he's trying (*Parent in government setting*).

Actually I believe and I understand they are qualified because personally at times I visit this school, I see the teachers busy teaching so that gives me a good impression that she is doing very well with the teachers and the teachers are equally qualified (*Parent in government setting*).

emm they're very highly qualified, professional teachers so I'm very comfortable with the learning environment, and the, the classes are comfortable (*Parent in private setting*).

That notwithstanding, there were a good number of parents who were not sure and did not consider teacher qualification as a reason for their choice. A parent in one of the private setting who was not sure about the qualification of teachers in her child's setting but had positive comments about how good they were and how quickly they accepted corrections from parents said:

The teachers here are good. They're good, yes. In qualifications I don't really know about eeh one but of course when you like there was a time I complained other time and they did something about it that was the other teacher I think she had an NCE or she was not really qualified but she was a good teacher but she there were some things I was noticing and I complained to them and they did something about it but the teachers now teaching my children because one is nursery one, one is in ehh nursery two. So, the teachers they're good. Yeah and whenever I notice anything I tell them they're grateful to correct, to take corrections from me (*Parent in private setting*).

The parents' responses showed that the choice of setting was informed by a number of reasons which included the quality of teachers in setting, the level of discipline in setting and the affordability of child care and education. When questioned on what they thought children were learning, different parents equated quality children's learning to literacy, numeracy, and an ability to recite the letters of the alphabet. For some others the emphasis and focus was on communication skills, child's ability to socialize with other children, greet parents and recite all they were taught, and children's ability to read or write and ability to recite poems. Participants' responses not only

reflect how different parents perceive and interpret quality learning, it represents some parents' conceptions or interpretations of success.

Time spent in settings and children's learning activities was an important consideration for working families

The trend in one of the state funded settings was that some children spent full days while some others spent half day in settings. All private settings in this study provided full day care. Irrespective of the type of setting, parents viewed the time spent in school very favourably and indicated that their children had positive experiences and rewarding moments at school. They expressed satisfaction with both the time spent at the settings and the activities children engaged in. Many claimed they observed an increased ability in different areas of learning and development. For instance, parents cited children's ability to recite poems, sweep, identification of colours, identifying the Nigerian flag, singing the national anthem, the ability to study independently with minimal supervision, humility, and good behaviour:

All of them they're trying like I said the one in primary in nursery one, three, she doesn't know how to sweep before. She don't know how to sweep pick up a broom and sweep. But since she started here she has start doing that at home. Then, all these shape like triangle, rectangle she don't know them before but I find out that from that school now from this school now, she's now picking up. Then the one in nursery two, she too she's picking up. She's picking up because some of the poem like colours of Nigerian flag all those eh anthem she can sing it very well when she come back at home (*Parent in government setting*).

The only thing I know is that the way they use to play so much, they no longer play like that and he now speaks English. Those in private school do not speak better than him. He really tries his best (*Parent in government setting*).

Childs stay in school is very innovative let me use that word and exciting for him. Aam he doesn't cry to go to school since he came in here. You know how it is like when you wake up a child at 6am and say come and take your bath and go to school and the child starts crying I don't want to go to school, that hasn't happened since he resumed here because he looks, I think it's very exciting for him so he always looks forward to being in school. I think it's quite exciting and innovative for him (*Parent in private setting*).

Okay my child's day in school from what she, you know interaction is normally ermm full of activities, ermm there at times when they ermm do the normal class routine, class work, they learn, the teacher you know, gets to teach them one or two things but they also I think it's a balanced this thing of ermm learning with fun as well to enable them...to enable them know when or what they're learning or learn faster. Yeah it's been a balance of learning with fun, playing, you know and then do what you know as its set for them on the curriculum for that year (*Parent in private setting*).

In response to the question: *Does the setting ever invite you into the classroom to see what is happening?* Many parents indicated that albeit they were not personally invited into the classrooms to see what and how their children were learning, the relationship that existed was such that enabled them to go in freely on their own from time to time:

No they have never, Yeah, yeah nothing like that. Yeah so that I can know how he is doing, if actually he is coping well or not, if there is any improvement but for me I can see there is an improvement in him (*Parent in government setting*).

They have not really invited me formally you understand but I from time to time I can it's like when I come to pick my child from school and I usually come earlier than usual so I can come into the class, they let me come into the class and then I don't think if I come they'll ask me to leave, yes but they've not like asked me to like today come and see no but I can come and go whenever I like yes (*Parent in private setting*).

You have times where like I do that a lot if I come to school, I see his class teacher, how's he doing today? How has he been doing, and all of that you know they, they tell you exactly how your child is doing, and err the challenges that the child is facing at that particular time arr so you have that and then the proprietress of the school she has an open door policy. Most times, the report comes to her directly if your child is not doing well like when he was having difficulties with adjusting, eeh I used to be called upon like he's smart, he's this, he can read, he can do that, but translating it into paper is a problem because he's being distracted, so I will come here, she'll tell me these are the complains teachers are giving about your son, this is what you should do at home to help us balance off (*Parent in private setting*).

Parents expressed satisfaction and had very positive comments about the progress their children were making. Different parents had different interpretations or perceptions of children's success. For instance, some measured success in terms of children's ability to read and write, count numbers,

identify and recite letters of the alphabet while others viewed success as children's ability to greet and respect elders; communicate effectively, recite poems and sweep the house

6.13 Changing Family Needs and Patterns Impacts on the Demand for Childcare Services

Parents' and teachers' perception of the length of time children spend in school

Data from this study showed that all government settings provided free child care between the hours of 8 A. M. to 1P.M. (5hours). However in a few selected settings that organized double shifts (morning and afternoon), parents were allowed to keep children for longer period (another 5 hours between 1 P.M. to 6 P.M.) if they so wished. In principle, free childcare was provided for 25 or 50 hour a week. In private settings services are provided between the hours of 7 A. M. to 4 or 5 P.M. There were cases where settings operated between 6.30 or 6.45 A. M. to 6 P.M. Teachers in the settings suggested that such provisions were tailored to suit or provide child care for working parents:

Yeah I think it's ok considering that some parents work and they are more comfortable with their children in school while they're at work rather than keeping them at home with somebody. I think the timing is ok. It is, am comfortable with the timing (*Teacher in private setting*).

You know most parents are civil servants, most of them are civil servants, so that they go early, most of them are traders, some of them move before that 7o'clock. So sometimes, you see children here between 6:35, 6:45. Setting does not observe mid-term break (*Proprietor in private setting*).

Exploring the views of parents on the length of time children spent in settings, it was obvious that the opinion on this issue was divided. For instance, some responses showed that many working families, parents in businesses and those intending to go back to work expressed satisfaction and made these positive comments about the length of time children spent in school:

To me oo it's a little bit short because the places that I got job in private school, they refused to admit me because of them. I cannot close at that time or take permission at that time and come to collect my children from the school and I don't have somebody that is staying with me that can take the burden off me. So I think if they extend it a little, by adding extra lesson time for them, I think it's better for me (*Parent in government setting*).

The school gate is open at seven because we have many of our parents who are bankers. They leave for work as early as six thirty and they, they, they have to drop their children at school. And then they close like four o'clock so if you if the school closes before four it becomes a problem for the parents. I discovered that majority of them will prefer eeh four pm because by four pm one can actually leave the office and then pick up the children so that's and again you try to ehh like ehh learning actually the classroom work stops like two pm and then from two pm to ehh three forty five we do co-curricular activities so that's why you see our children even at four pm they're still very strong and looking good (*Teacher in private setting*).

Since they entered here, I now have a relaxed mind. It gave me chance now to go for my normal work or normal business and all of us will come to school and go back at the same time. So it doesn't give me much concern who will go and pick them from the school so I equally enjoy the shift here (*Parent in government setting – enrolled in both morning and afternoon sessions*).

In contrast, a number of parents who had some reservations or felt uncomfortable with children spending long day in school gave the following reasons:

To me, the length is okay, I'm very, very comfortable with it (*meaning with the government setting where his own child attends*) because all these private schools now, you'll find out that a child in the morning will go to school by seven o'clock, you will see most of them coming back around six o'clock, seven o'clock. Three o'clock four o'clock. So to me I feel that it's stressful to that child because one, the child will not have enough rest to go to school the next day, the following day but the rate or the hour given to this particular school, a child can come home, have his or her bath, take her lunch or his lunch, and still have rest! To continue for another lesson even if the parents or anyone at home still want to guide the child on a particular assignment but if a child should come back around that stressful time, you'll find out that that there will it's going to be a kind of diminishing returns because the child will not gain anything. That is why I choose the time here (*Parent in government setting*).

I didn't actually like the idea but I think I spared the idea because of the fact that I happened to be a teacher in the school. But right now presently I'm no longer with the school and I'm still planning to see where I can take him to a shorter length because the

interval is much. I don't have the time to spend with my child much and I feel for his age. That time is too much for that age (*Parent in private setting*).

Before the child got to school I think the closeness was more. But after the enrolment into school I think I've seen a little lapses there. The closeness is not as before. Probably because that's when he comes back he gets tired he sleeps the next morning we're up for school again. So I can't quantify the two. The closeness is not as before when I was with him in the house (*Parent in private setting*).

The concern for this very parent was more about the loss of closeness and bonding between her and the child.

Teachers perceptions of the Influx of children into state schools, on group size, class management and quality of children's' learning

Large group size was identified as a major challenge and a common occurrence in all state funded settings in this study. Observations revealed completely different experiences in terms of group sizes and class management in the private and government settings visited. Evidently, many did not adhere to NERDC recommended adult/child ratio. This was the case in all six government and one private setting. Irrespective of the age of the children, classes were very large and there were no teaching assistants which made effective class management and teacher pupil interaction quite difficult and challenging for teachers. A class in one of the private setting had children of different age groups and was handled by just one teacher who claimed the group was 'merged' because they were few.

Teachers in all the state funded settings in this study gave accounts that suggested overwhelmingly large group sizes which made management and control quite difficult for a single teacher. Responding to the question: *What is the adult /child ratio in your setting?* These excerpts from the interviews illustrate some views or perception of existing group sizes in ECE in this case study:

Nursery population is about 100 plus. Ratio is 1:27 with no attendants. I have two classes in one classroom, here is about, yes with about 54. 2:54 pupils. What I mean is,

the class is divided into two. One class is 27 another is 27 and we are in the same classroom (*Teacher in state school*).

40 Children to 1 teacher for children aged 2-3years; 38 children to 1 teacher and 42 to 1 teacher. We don't have an attendants nobody is our attendant. The teacher will do everything. You will be teaching, they will be disturbing you, some will be crying, some will be poo-pooing(laugh) some will want to go and wee-wee, like that, massive group size. Very, very! Very, very! We need help. Many of a time if you count the whole pupils in the class, they're ninety something. If you count, irrespective of your class, if you count 1, 2,3,4,5, the whole inside the one class, we can have up to ninety something (*Teacher in state school*).

In ECCD, we have almost a hundred and ten. We're three teachers in two classrooms, two large classrooms. We're one hundred and, Hundred and ten, hundred and ten (110). Previously we were four classes but ehh when the guest officer from SUBEB came she merged the last class. There was no visible teacher she said no madam there's no way you alone can handle two classes so we had to merge the two classes. I have 40 children in my class. I have forty my colleagues they have 35, 35 each (1:40, 1:35, 1:35). What I'm telling you is that we even have two classes here. So we have more than forty children here. My class, and the next class we're here together, almost 70 something. I have forty, my neighbour the lady that is supposed to be here, who reported sick today, this is her register. I alone I do the work! I'm the only one. I am entitled to a caregiver. The problem is the government has not been able to give us any caregiver. We I as the class teacher I serve as a caregiver, I even serve as a security. So I make sure my children are in class, I stay behind after school, to make sure that their parents have picked them before I go home (*Teacher in state school*).

Birth-three years we have about 20 children. 20:1. it's too much. It's too much we need more hands we need more teachers. No attendants, no we don't have and we need the care givers you know these people handling these kids they are all graduates then we need the caregivers to support (*Teacher in state school*).

The population of this school is much. Even though here, this nursery 1 and nursery 2 we are about err, we are about eighty something in this class. Not even talking of nursery 3 that is in the other section. We are about eighty something. There are about thirty something, in my own register. We are two in class, we are two in class. That person is having thirty something then when the other teacher will be teaching, the other teacher will be controlling them so in this two, minus the 2, I don't know how many they are, they are many. Nursery one and nursery two are here in this class. You know that we've lacked teachers here, we don't have enough teachers here as we don't have enough teachers here, then he's having his own and am having my own, then we have different (*Teacher in state school*).

Although the government approved standard was one caregiver and one helper per 20-25 children of birth-three year olds and one caregiver and one helper for children 3-5 years old (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005), data revealed inadequate number of teaching and support staff in state schools. The reality for these teachers was the large group sizes they contended with. The absence of attendants or support teachers even when members of staff called in sick or absent, meant adult child ratios were about 1:70 or 2:100. All ECE classes in state schools in this study failed to meet the minimum standard as three classes were squashed into one classroom. This size minimised effective teacher pupil interactions. The pressure experienced or felt by these teachers is revealed in their use of phrases or statements such as "The population of this school is much", "Massive group size", "We need help", "The classes have increased", "Ratio is 100:3 teachers", "The size is too large" "We're facing many challenges, we're facing many, many challenges". The findings showed that settings in this study did not meet the minimum standard of 16 square meters for 20-25 children, they did not have proper ventilation with at least two doors, and they did not have a design allowing for free movement, nor flexible sitting arrangements (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005). All interviewees attributed it to the influx of children into state schools, following the declaration of Universal Basic Education for children in ECE in Nigeria. The excerpts below are some parents' reaction to policy changes in ECE in Owerri, two interviewees described how children were withdrawn in great numbers from private settings to state schools hence the over population in the classes. The two parents had this to say:

They teach them very well. Even some parents from private schools have brought their children to this very place. [...] Mgbam. They are very many here, children from private schools (*Parent in state school*).

Ehh the influx of children to government schools started with the incoming of this our able governor. He came and boosted education, made state schools more attractive than public schools so a lot of parents were forced to withdraw their children from ehh the private schools and brought them to government school. And his, also what he has done is that he has helped to tame the excessive school fees (*Teacher in state school*).

Some teachers revealed the impact of increased enrolments on both children's learning and teachers' well-being, particularly without a corresponding increase in the ECE workforce in state funded settings. In response to the question: *How does your present class size or group size affect the teaching and care you provide?* Many interviewees expressed concern about over crowded classes and a lack of effective teaching. This affected the quality of education and care provided for children in these circumstances. The following excerpts from teachers in different state funded settings revealed the perceptions of the teachers and the very difficult circumstances they are faced with. It is worth noting that this was the trend in all state schools in this study:

It's too much. It's because of the teachers we're talking of. It's supposed to be twenty five, but we've made it to be thirty because of no teachers. For me as an individual it's somehow difficult. It's difficult, yes I do manage. There's nothing I can do (*Teacher in state school*).

It does because ehh even the children themselves, you know at their age they're very, very active. Very, very active and they will want you to care for them. While you're attending to one child another one will be demanding your attention and you know they're just at this age that need they're so self centered. So if with that now actually as a teacher I am really finding it difficult meeting up with the challenges of teaching them. [.....]. The only thing is that it comes back it falls back on me, I get tired most of the time, and it is the same salary. Recently they said they will be giving us incentives as ehh ECCD teachers, we're yet to see any. I double as a teacher, caregiver, security, and I feed them. There's some of them from their homes they've not learnt how to eat very well. You'll see me carrying them. I come to school in my white with eh a cover cloth. I have to, you'll see me sitting on a little table, they'll surround me I will feed this one, feed the other one. The, the thing is that this is a model school and because we want things to work, I cannot just, no matter my status, I cannot just complain and complain. I said let me start from somewhere. Ermm like if it is on the normal day that we teach, it means I will limit what I will teach. If I'm supposed to teach five subjects a day, I may have to teach three. And then in supervision, I will not be able to go round all of them. I may have to do random sampling. Random sampling in that in the sense that I may have to use some children to set example for others. There is no way I can go round their table, correcting them if it is writing. [.....]. It's a big problem to us! and that affects the performance of the teacher and the pupil. Yes, because, for teaching to be effective, you should have teacher-pupil relationship very cordial, attending to each pupil you know their age limit. You should attend, give them time! But, with this population, we're human beings. We can't with you sweating and they sweating, crying everywhere (*Teacher in state school*).

As you know, there will be no effective teaching. If you if you teach them you will teach eh English communication skill in the morning, after that, due to the children are many, how can you do correction and mark the paper in there? It is impossible for any human being to handle that! And noise here and there! No mainstreaming, nothing to mainstream us here. N-n-nothing, we're just suffering. Teachers, we're suffering here. Every time headache we're having fever and headache (*Teacher in state school*).

Yes it has an effect academically because as an individual, you will not have that enough time to attend to them one by one like assuming they want to write now, I will share the books because I collect the books and keep, I will then share the books, then sharpen the pencil, before sharing the books, before sharpening and start writing and for them to write and guide them on what to write, that period that time allocated to that subject has gone. Yes I do the work alone. that aspect it is not easy for me to have specific caring because err you might start caring for a child here, the other ones at the end will be calling your attention for you to attend him or her so it is not easy. It is not an easy task (*Teacher in state school*).

The greatest challenge or frustration for these teachers was not being able to effectively provide or meet the individual needs of children within their groups. These accounts contrasted sharply with the experiences of teachers and parents in two private case study settings which had very small group sizes and adult child ratio when compared with state schools. The views of practitioners engaged in the two well-resourced private settings is captured in these responses given below:

(The) entire population of children in ECE is 30. Ratio is 2:6; yeah it is not crowded. It's very, very conducive, because (laughs), I manage them very well (*Teacher in private setting*).

(The) School population is 68. Ratio is 1:8; 1:16, Group size: 1: 27. Sometimes, I do help her. At least, for those that are wearing pampers, time for changing them (*Proprietor in Private Setting*.)

In a class of ten, we have one teacher and one child governor so there are some other, other classes where we have up to fifteen. We have one teacher and err two assistants (*Teacher in private setting*).

Ratio 19:1. For now because our population are that is not all that much, every chi-every class in the pre-nursery and nursery sections have a class teacher and an assistant or we call it here child governor (*Teacher in private setting*).

Ratio is 18:2; 20:2; 15:2. You know our, our, our, ehh limit number in each class is just twenty so if it exceeds twenty the class is divided so we don't want a crowded environment. We do one on one learning (*Teacher in private sector*)

My son's class, they're only about six or seven, yes and in my daughter's they're about nine or ten (*Parent in private setting*).

The explanation given for this very small group sizes relates to the failure of private settings to attract more parents. This has to do with the issue of affordability, particularly for low income families who are effectively priced out of provision in some private schools in Owerri. Despite the perceived benefits, one of the parents above was critical of the small group size, citing lack of competition among children as a major challenge in such classes:

The main problem I think my children are having now is ehh... how will I put it now (pause). The challenges they're having actually now is like ok the school is still growing they don't have too many pupils so the competition is not yet ehh they're not competing very well with because of the small population, yes so I feel maybe when the school gets bigger, then the competition gets eeh we'll now know if actually they're as good as other students, other children in other schools (*Parent in private setting*).

Reflecting on her days as a student, a parent expressed concern as she recalled the healthy competition that existed in a larger group in her own time and compared it with her child's learning and group size:

So but if they were like fifteen in a class you know the competition. I'm talking from experience, from how I grew up, where I went to school. Yeah, yeah. But other than that I think I think I'm good (*Parent in private setting*).

6.14 Disparities in Early Childhood Education Curriculum and Minimum Standard that Apply to Settings

Variations in programme content and curriculum implementation in settings

The Integrated Early Childhood Development Curriculum (IECD) in Nigeria was designed to provide interventions for the cognitive, physical, social, moral, and emotional development of

children birth to 5 years and was meant to harmonize practice and serve as a guide for all teachers. Responding to the question: *What curriculum is implemented in your setting?* Findings clearly showed that all early years settings in this study did not implement the same curriculum for children between birth-five years. It equally revealed how uninformed almost all the teachers who ought to implement the 2007 national curriculum were. In my discussion with a teacher in charge of ECE in one of the case study settings, there was indication that she had knowledge of and freely discussed the curriculum citing examples of how it was applied in everyday teaching and learning. She said,

Aah I think ee there's a new ah there's another curriculum now. The one they call integrated. The one we're using presently is the integrated curriculum. It's about two, three years old, yes. And in that one they want us to teach from a topic we teach everything. We could take a rhyme, like if I if I begin to sing this rhyme, eh the farmer picks his oranges, one two three, up to ten, the the what that curriculum is saying is that from that rhyme, I should teach rhyme, I should teach English, I should also teach Maths and every other subject it can lend itself to. Like you'll have nature studies there that is scientific and reflective teaching eh listening, informing us of the activities of the farmer. That is what we're using now is the integrated curriculum, where you pick a particular topic and you spread it to other areas of study for the child to also learn from there to know that these things are interrelated (*Teacher in charge of ECE in a government setting*).

This teacher confirmed that she was one of those who regularly represented her setting at seminars and workshops organized for early years practitioners. This was the opportunity most teachers in her setting scarcely had. One teacher insisted she was in the best position to grant interviews because she was more informed and often represented the setting at external meetings, seminars and programmes in ECE. Similar to the response from the section leader above, another ECE section head explained what the Integrated Early Childhood Curriculum meant and how it was implemented in her setting:

Ok recently the UNICEF gave us a uniform curriculum just for ECCDE. Now they said we should use integrated curriculum. By that integration everything merge together we don't split them. These children are tender, they say they don't want to see us writing science for a child who is birth-three. The child will not understand what we are saying. You write science for a child who is 4, 3-4, it will be sounding Greek, likewise the four to five. They said if we bring the topic, let every other topic be integrated into that one topic. You use, we use play way method, we use dramatization so we don't do much of

writing we don't do much of explanation but when we play and display one thing or the other the child will get what you are saying. So that integrated curriculum everything is emerged together and if you are not trained you will not be able to cope with that curriculum because you bring out a subject, you teach that subject English language is there, mathematics is there, science is there, every other subject, health habit is there, social habit is there so that is the curriculum we are using now The Integrated Curriculum from UNICEF. No this one is different, this one is very different. This one is integrated as I told you. , every other subject is there and that is what they want, that is what they say they want, that is what they say they need and not writing, splitting the subjects, writing math, science for these underage children (*Teacher in charge of ECE in government setting*).

A good number of teachers had difficulty explaining or discussing what curriculum was implemented in their respective settings or what it meant for teaching and learning. Some had no knowledge of the curriculum at all. For instance in the course of negotiating access to a case study setting, I engaged in discussion with the proprietor who insisted that there was nothing like a curriculum for early years education in Nigeria, until the head teacher and I took out time and explained the 2007 framework to her. Even as a proprietor of a setting with children from birth to 5 years, she was completely unaware of a curriculum. The superficial or vague responses given by many other interviewees was indicative of the fact that some had no knowledge of the integrated early years curriculum. Teachers responded with comments such as "I don't have an Idea", "the state has their own curriculum", "yeah, given to us by the state ministry of education, that is the one we are using", "Em we borrow ideas from government and other areas to teach these children", "It's the most recent one, and "We're using ECC curriculum". This raises concerns about the level of awareness created before and after the curriculum was launched and if indeed teachers were adequately trained on its implementation. A teacher interviewed in one of the government funded case study setting said:

We are not using that particular one. It is not provided to our school err the state has their own curriculum (*Teacher in government setting*).

Yet, this teacher was unable to give details or highlight the contents of the "state curriculum". This was equally true of the teacher with the mixed age group in one of the private setting. She was equally unable to explain the curriculum she was using and how she planned activities for children, taking into consideration the fact that children in primary and nursery classes were grouped together. The teacher was quick to state:

That's the kind of education we offer to them. Yeah, we are using the curriculum we think is suitable. Yes, because it's what, as in the curriculum is what we designed ourselves, with our proprietor (*Teacher in private setting*).

The study revealed that some teachers had challenges accessing the curriculum for ECE. A teacher in one of the government settings explained the difficulty she encountered as she tried to procure the policy document. Other teachers expressed similar concern and how they went about sourcing for what they felt was adequate for children:

Yes there's a curriculum, we use it in writing lesson note. Curriculum is, is provided by me. I bought it from the market. It is not available here. Yes it's not available in schools. It wasn't provided by the government but by individual teachers. It wasn't provided by the government but by individual teachers. I decided it. I went to the market and asked about that the curriculum for nursery session; yes I purchased it from the market; the government would have done that but they did not. I paid for it with my own money (*Teacher in government setting*).

The study equally revealed that one of the private case study settings combined the curriculum that are functional in the global North (United Kingdom and the U.S.), a move criticized for failing to take the specific economic, socio-political, cultural contexts and experiences of children and societies into consideration (Nsamenang, 2008, Boyden, 1990). Yet these excerpts highlight the perceptions of the proprietor, a parent and head teacher in a case study setting who were very confident about how adequate the curriculum from others contexts might be:

Ok like in this in the X Schools we use four different curriculums. We use the British curriculum, Nigerian curriculum, Montessori curriculum and American curriculum here. Erm for us using the Nigerian curriculum because we're in Nigeria so we need to our learning, teaching and learning supposed to take care of whatever that is happening in

our environment, and again we use the British curriculum because it's an international school and that's the choice of erm eh erm our big mummy, the proprietor of the school. We also use erm the Montessori because you know the children love learning with play you know learn with what they see around them so that's why we consider the cur erm joining the Montessori curriculum into our school curriculum (*Teacher in private setting*).

The curriculum here is unique to us because emm it's like ehh I call it mix and match. I call it mix and match because erm there is an element of the Nigerian curriculum because these children are Nigerians so they have to you know charity has to begin at home. Then we also have the British and American curriculum, err we and then we top it up with the ehh Montessori part of Montessori curriculum because aah we're not doing full Montessori curriculum here. So we bring the Nigerian aspect of it because they are Nigerians. We also bring in the British and American because it's not every child that will finish from here and remain in Nigeria some of them will their academic ermm pathway might be in the UK, or Canada or wherever. Then for the Montessori because Montessori's philosophy is that learning must be put into play. Yes it's unique to us so that's the, my curriculum, our curriculum here is not like any other one because it has no name. It has no name its ehhaa merge that's a merge of ehh different curriculum (*Proprietor in private setting*).

The views of the interviewees are consistent with the findings of the questionnaire data on the issue of curriculum suggesting that the national framework for early childhood education was not effectively implemented in early years setting in this study content and experience of, as well as access to the curriculum was not the same for children from birth to 5 years.

Safety and Security concerns in ECE settings

Security was identified as a major challenge in seven of the case study settings. Teachers recalled how settings served as thorough fare for passersby which meant that intruders gained access to settings at will causing damage. A teacher discussed how trespassers burnt down the school library for the primary classes shown below. Her complaint was:

We don't know the person who burn this place. People entering inside to collect our chairs and all the rest of them. Government supposed to give us good quantity, put it with ehh iron so that all these all those things will be saved (*Teacher in government setting*).

The following excerpts highlights the challenges teachers and children faced with regards to safety and security in their various school environment:

Erhen, yes now. We don't have gate here in the school so what we do we have to pray that God should give us the wisdom to guide them. When they are out for break, we teachers we carry our chair out to monitor but there was a time government sent some this em, what do you call this em, I have forgotten, a sort of police to guide. There is no fence. There was a time a man came to you know, kidnap some children here but as God may have it, we got him and he ran away so that is why since then we've been monitoring when they are out for break we will also come out with our chair to monitor them till the school is over (Teacher in government setting (*Teacher in government setting*)).

Teachers watch and supervise children we always lock this place. We invited the army so about thirty, thirty minutes (30 minutes intervals), they come in here, just come in look around, they go, thirty minutes again, they come and go. The country was rough during that time (*Proprietor private setting*).

Some teachers in government settings described how they foiled attempts by kidnappers on different occasions. Teachers claimed they can only watch and pray because the school was not fenced and they could not do much because it served as a thoroughfare for people passing by.

6.15 Inconsistencies in the regulatory system for overseeing quality in ECE

Quality assurance in ECE settings

The regulatory and monitoring pattern in early years settings in this study was a theme that emerged during data analysis. One of the commitments of the Federal Government in the policy guidelines for implementation of ECE is to 'set, maintain and improve standards in all aspects of the school system' (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013:79). The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEBS) have a statutory mandate for basic education which currently includes ECE. The Federal Government, through the Ministry of Education and the Universal Basic Education Commission, provides leadership through broad policy guidance, setting national standards and providing a regulatory framework (Akanbi, 2012). In other words they are the official bodies responsible for supervision and coordination of primary and early years learning to ensure maintenance of standards or quality control through regular inspection and supervision. Consequently ground rules or code of conduct

for establishing ECE centres were put in place and the Ministry of Education was charged with the responsibility of granting approval and ensuring compliance with set standards.

Ineffectiveness of quality assurance systems in ECE settings

Data revealed obvious gap between government policy guidelines and actual practice in ECE. Principally, a lack of consistency in supervision in terms of frequency of visits to each setting was observed. For instance, in response to the questions: *Does any government regulatory agency inspect facilities and programmes in your setting? How often do they visit your setting?* Some teachers confirmed that they were visited regularly. The following excerpts highlights how differently teachers or settings experienced supervision:

We normally see the SUBEB people, the local government, even the director of education. He visits here. Regularly. In in one week you might see two groups if you don't see the SUBEB you'll see the director even Abuja people they will come. In a week you can see two different group that come to supervise the school. The inspection makes us to be more, more higher and more... you will prepare yourself because you don't know any day they will come they don't inform us so everyday you're coming o school you're prepared (*Teacher in government setting*).

Constantly they come to the school. They come on supervision, they supervise our teaching, supervise the equipment's they have supplied to the schools and err the children, ability of the children. They come to the class, we teach the children. Whatever they meet you are doing, they watch and give you corrections. Even dressing, whatever they will correct. Your lesson notes they will read your lesson notes whether it is marked because you are supposed to mark your lesson notes. Your lesson notes should be marked before you teach. It must be marked before you teach so they will read your note whether you are being up to standard. Diaries and registers they do check them and they have columns, they mark all the columns before they go and at the end of the day they will write their reports in the visitors log book. They will log whatever is their observation in their log book and visitors book (*Teacher in government setting*).

The one here LGEA, very close to us they frequently always come here to inspect whatever that we are doing. Even people from SUBEB they use to come here. At times they come like 4 or 5 times in a term to come and inspect whatever we are doing so they always come (*Teacher in government setting*).

Other teachers suggested that they either saw the supervisors once or twice in a long while:

Visits from State Education Management Board. Err we've seen them once since we started (*Proprietor in private setting*).

When she started now, they were here Er hen to supervise the environment before the school setting. Yeah, they have, they have. They do. When we went I think when we went ehh for our primary six registration ehh I think they were here once (*Teacher in a private setting*).

These responses confirmed that the standards and the rate of supervision varied in private and government settings. As at the time the interview was conducted, two of the private settings had been in existence for over three and six years respectively. In other words, they had not been supervised for that length of time.

Undesired consequences of weak regulation of early years education

Apparently, not all settings in this study were in compliance with government guidelines in terms of meeting the requirements for operating ECE centres. It was found that all government settings in this study did not meet the national guidelines and that some proprietors established settings without registration or the approval of the MOE. A proprietor in an unregistered private setting described how she achieved that and remained unnoticed with the assistance of another proprietor who had been running a school for a number of years without meeting government requirements:

No government regulatory agency has visited the setting because I have not gone for registration. I can operate unchecked for at least two, three, four years, since you don't have anything like signpost. Reason is. If you put signpost without registering, you are looking for their trouble. So, what you have not registered, maybe because you don't have the money to pay for that, you have to keep calm. A friend of mine that has a school told me that if I go now, since the school is just starting, that they will start disturbing me so what I had to do, I had to arrange myself, get some money then get some things in order before moving ahead for that. No penalty for non-compliance (*Proprietor in private setting*).

Participants were asked whether there were punitive measures in place in the event of non-compliance. A good number of teachers suggested that their settings often complied. Evidently the state of facilities in most settings proved otherwise. For instance the shortfall in the actual number of teachers required in settings, the poor state of the facilities and infrastructures and the lack of the

most basic needs in seven of the settings in this study was a confirmation that most did not comply with government guidelines but none of the teachers indicated that they were reprimanded at any point in time. The excerpts below highlights the perceptions of two interviewees with respect to supervisors and supervision of ECE settings in Owerri.

They're not effective at all. They're not and that's why you know half-baked schools are just coming up every day, every day you have a school that is sub-standard, once they come once you give them money they approve the school yea. As long as you're able to give them money, they will approve the school (*Proprietor in private setting*).

There is none. My dear when someone fails to meet up, he or she attracts a punishment. When schools fail to meet the requirement there should have been punishment but I have not seen any one punished. I have not seen. They have not done anything. What they tell us is Oh we have taken notice of that when we go, we will tell the person in charge. No solution yet. Yes promises here and there yet none has been fulfilled. Err they should wake up and meet those requirements (*Teacher in government setting*).

This proprietor and teacher painted the picture of ineffectiveness and corruption in the regulatory system and alluded to the fact that no individual or setting had been punished for non-compliance. On the whole, seven of the nine case study settings did not meet the guidelines set out by the government as was seen in the observations of the children's learning environments.

6.16 Analysis of the questionnaire data

Four paper questionnaires containing 28 questions were sent out, completed and returned by employees of the MOE who felt uncomfortable and declined participation in recorded interviews as a result of the sensitivity of their positions as government employees. These officials were directly involved in the inspection or monitoring of settings. The questionnaire was designed to gain the perspective of these stakeholders (government regulatory agents) in relation to provision for children. Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the items presented on a 4 point Likert scale. See (appendix D). The questionnaire was designed mainly to generate information required for answering the research questions and achieving the research goals, the questionnaire was designed to focus on themes such as the curriculum for early years

education, the learning environment, funding, monitoring and inspection, access to and quality of provision, teacher development and the conditions of service of early years practitioners.

No statistical analysis was employed in the analysis of the questionnaires. That option was not explored due to the low number of participants. Rather, their responses were analysed qualitatively for congruence and divergence of opinion. The information provided was analysed in relation to relevant themes covered and later compared with responses given by parents and early years practitioners in this study. Despite the low responses, the decision to keep the information generated through this source in this thesis is based on the fact that it provided useful information on the issues of access and quality in ECE in Owerri.

Respondents perception of curriculum in early years education

This questionnaire item explored the perception of some government employees in charge of supervision and monitoring of ECE settings centres in Owerri, in relation to how effectively the 2007 National Curriculum Framework is implemented in all ECE settings in Owerri, it also sought to seek the opinions of employees of the MOE with regard to the curriculum content and access. All respondents to the questionnaire indicated strong disagreement in relation to statements about the 2007 National Curriculum being effectively implemented. All respondents indicated that they did not feel that the curriculum content is the same for all children in early years settings in Imo state, and all indicated that they did not feel children access a quality curriculum. Further, none of the respondents felt that the curriculum meets the individual needs of the children.

Funding of ECE

The issue of funding of ECE was addressed by respondents who were asked if they felt that ECE settings are adequately and regularly funded and if private early years settings are adequately funded by the government. In relation to the above theme, all four respondents indicated disagreement with the statement that government settings in Owerri are adequately and regularly funded by the government. Indeed, they all strongly disagree that private early years settings are

adequately and frequently funded. Perhaps the sensible explanation for this standpoint is that there is no provision whatsoever for all children in private early years settings. Literature on funding ECE in Nigeria which has been used to corroborate some of the findings in this study suggests that private early years centres are largely run or funded with fees paid by parents (see (Osakue, 2011, MATTHEW, 2016). This standpoint is consistent with the views of the interviewees in this study. Therefore all participants in this study indicated that they did not feel that the early years settings are regularly funded by government. They also indicated strong disagreement in relation to the statement about private early years settings being adequately funded.

Quality control in ECE

Quality assurance, monitoring, and supervision of ECE settings were queried using the questionnaire. Respondents' views were sought in relation to how effectively settings are monitored and controlled to ensure compliance to stipulated standards, the frequency of inspection and monitoring and the mechanisms or measures in place for enforcing sanctions in the event of non-compliance. Depending on the geographical location, respondents' views regarding these statements differed. For instance, two respondents in charge of settings in the metropolis agreed that settings were effectively monitored to ensure compliance with government stipulated standards. They also agreed that the frequency of supervision and control was high. In contrast, two respondents in charge of settings in semi-urban areas disagreed with this view as they did not feel that early years settings were adequately supervised. Nevertheless, all four respondents agreed that there were punitive measures in place in the event of non-compliance.

Children's learning environment

The questionnaire items which focused on children's learning environments, sought to understand the perception of the respondents in relation to how early years learning environments meet stipulated government standards, the provision of infrastructures and facilities in early years settings and the adequacy of the learning materials and resources provided. All four respondents indicated

disagreement with the statement that children's learning environment in ECE settings in Owerri meet the government's stipulated standard. They also disagree that infrastructures and learning resources were adequately supplied. The opinion of the respondents regarding how, and if, settings are supported and encouraged in quality improvement in ECE was divided. Two participants agree while the other two disagreed that settings were supported and encouraged in quality improvement. This finding corroborates the views and perceptions of the interviewees in this study, regarding this issue of children's learning environments.

Equity and access in for children in ECE

In exploring the issues of equity and access in the provision for children, respondents were required to indicate if the ECE policy framework addresses inequality in early childhood education, if equal access exists for all children between birth-five years and how adequately children with special educational needs and disadvantaged children are catered for in ECE. Only one respondent indicated that equal access exists for all children between birth-five years. The other three respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that access exists. All four participants indicated disagreement in relation to the statement that the 2007 policy framework addresses inequality in ECE in Imo state. The respondents equally indicated that existing provision for disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs was inadequate. This is consistent with the views and perceptions of the interviewees and findings of the observations carried out in the case study settings. The observations and interviews revealed that all the settings in this study lacked facilities and equipment to support children with special needs, there were no teachers with qualifications in special education and children with learning disability or special educational needs were not admitted in main stream schools.

Respondents perception of quality in early years settings

With respect to the quality of provision available to children between birth-five years in the case study, all respondents indicated a strong disagreement in relation to the statement that the quality of

provision for children in private and government settings are of the same quality and that the adult-child ratio in early years settings is adequate. Regarding quality control and monitoring of ECE settings, the opinions were divided on the effectiveness of the monitoring bodies or agency working to deliver high quality ECE. Whereas two of the respondents agreed that there was effective co-ordination and supervision of settings, the other two disagreed with the statement. Differences in opinion could be attributed to the type and geographical location of settings in terms of rural, urban or semi-urban schools. It is also indicative of the varied nature of the issues of both quality of provision and inadequate co-ordination of services highlighted by some interviewees in this study.

Professional development and conditions of service

In an effort to elicit the perceptions of respondents in relation to the issues of professional development and conditions of service of early years practitioners, the questionnaire items focused mainly on teachers' continuing development programmes, the recruitment of trained teachers and whether or not it matches the demand for early years teachers, the retention of early years workers and the conditions of service of early years practitioners in private settings when compared with their counterparts in government schools. All respondents to the questionnaire indicated strong agreement in relation to statements about the availability of teachers' continuing development programmes and their conditions of service. They all indicated that they did not feel that teachers have been adequately trained to deliver the new curriculum, and that the conditions of service for qualified ECE practitioners in state schools is the same as their counterparts in private settings. Further, respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that there is high retention of early years professionals and recruitment of trained early years professional matches the demand in ECE.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study. It is a general overview of stakeholders' perceptions of the 2007 Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy in relation to the issues of access and quality in the provision for children. Findings from this study was analysed under

various themes that emerged from the data. Information gathered revealed significant gap between government policy on ECE and actual practice or real life experiences of the stakeholders in this study. Despite increased government involvement in the provision for children, huge challenges still exists. The next chapter will present analysis and discussion of the findings, limitations and significance of the study, and suggestions for further studies.

Chapter Seven

Discussion of findings

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of this study, highlighting the findings in relation to issues of relevance in the study context and more broadly. The aim of the discussion is to aid our understanding of stakeholders' perceptions of the issues of access to and quality of provision available to young children in ECE in Owerri Imo State, Nigeria. The limitations of the research implications, and recommendations for further research are addressed. The research questions in this study were:

1. What perception do stakeholders in Imo State have of the 2007 Government Policy on Early Childhood Education and Care in Nigeria in relation to
 - i Process and structure as dimensions of quality
 - ii Affordability of Early Childhood Education and Care
2. How do these perceptions match government policies?

To reiterate, the research questions were examined through the lenses of stakeholders (employees of MOE, parents of young children and practitioners) in selected pre-schools in Owerri, Imo state. The aim was to understand the lived experiences of stakeholders with regard to the 2007 ECE policy, which was designed by the government to create equal opportunities to quality learning and also to harmonize the highly fragmented ECE in Nigeria. This study sought to ascertain how consistent these perceptions are with government's policy claims. As identified in the review of literature, there have been a number of initiatives that have influenced the practice and provision in early childhood education in Nigeria both locally and globally. For instance, Nigeria has adopted the eight MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), ratified the UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) and pledged to achieve the six goals of EFA (Education for All) thus confirming a

commitment to a joint plan to provide quality basic education for all its citizens, to halve extreme poverty, to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, and to protect children's rights.

Amongst other things, this called for an improved budgetary allocation for early years education, policy reforms and framework for children's learning, support to parents and legal guardians, provision of institutions and services to cater of children of working and non-working families alike. As stated in this thesis, the 2007 curriculum framework on ECE and the National Policy on Education in Nigeria was designed in response to the changes that took place. Therefore, it was important to examine how the curriculum framework was put into place, and how the government is meeting its commitments. While government reporting of the provision may be available, these reports only give one perspective. The voices of stakeholders are often not included in government reporting. Hence, this research project sought the views of stakeholders, and can provide insight into how government policies are or are not being implemented. Stakeholder insights can also help us to better understand how the perspectives of people participating in early childhood education might be taken into consideration when designing and evaluating programmes.

This discussion will focus on how the findings of this study illustrate gaps and contradicting commitments on the part of the government, stakeholders' lack of awareness regarding the government commitments, uneven resources and provision for children, and in some cases a lack of access to early childhood education (despite government commitments). The conclusion will address the overarching discourses of human rights v. human capital that can be thought of in relation to the 2007 curriculum framework.

7.2 Gaps and contradicting commitments in both structure and process quality

With respect to approach to policy implementation in Owerri Imo state Nigeria, what was observed was more of a positivist stance. A top-down approach to policy making also described as 'governing elite phenomenon' (see Deleon, cited in Pülzl & Treib, 2007: 91) was employed. Government entities in conjunction with national actors and UNICEF an international non-governmental

organization centrally determine, influence and exercise control over the design and implementation of ECE policies and programmes for children from birth to five years. The implication is that the difficult task of policy interpretation was left to the numerous implementers in Owerri.

Following the examination of the data generated through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with participants, and observations carried out in settings, this study found that significant gap exists between government policy statements and actual programme implementation and practice in ECE in Owerri. This is in spite of the suggestion in the 2013 National Policy on Education in Nigeria, that the series of revisions in policy (revised 1981, 1988, 2004, 2007 and 2013) were meant to address noticeable gaps that emerged in the course of implementing previous policies particularly as it relates to content and provisions (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013). This study identified contradictions and failures on the part of government in fulfilling its pledge and commitment to the international community on one hand and to Nigerian citizens in general and children in ECE in particular.

There was also contradiction in the sense of gratitude expressed by many stakeholders despite the challenges they faced and obvious lack of most basic resources in children's learning. The gap between government statements was more evident when actual practice and day to day experiences described by participants in this study were compared with the language that permeates the 2007 National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development (NPIECD) and other related policy documents such as the National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres (NMSECCC) and the Guidelines for Implementing National Policy on Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria. These official documents provide the frame of reference in the provision of services for children between birth-five years and are central to the provision of uniform or a nationally consistent standard and quality services for early childhood education centres in Nigeria. Explicitly, they serve as a guide and define the roles of government, and the requirements for both private and

state funded settings regarding the minimum standards for the establishment of early years centres such as staff qualifications, curriculum for early years, age cohorts, methods and language of instruction, learning resources, adult /child ratios, safety of children, children's learning experiences, environment and quality control mechanisms (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013, Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005).

This study showed that on paper, the 2007 curriculum framework is based on birth-three years and 3-5 years cohorts, and has goals for children's health and development (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2007) yet in practice it falls short of the claims as there was practically nothing in all state settings for children under 3 in terms resources, space, carers and teacher learning material, staff and space. No child under 3 years was found to be enrolled in state settings in this study. The only chance of accessing provision in ECE for this group, was principally through private for profit providers. Therefore, this case study illustrates gaps in the government's commitments and implementation with regard to early childhood education, particularly for the youngest children. This is a clear contradiction. The situation in the case study settings is consistent with the views of public policy scholars in the reviewed literature such as Weaver (2009) and Hallsworth, (2011). For instance, Weaver noted that policy outcomes may or may not always be consistent with the goals and objectives of policy designers thus leading to poor government performance or outright failures. Hallsworth (2011: 5) attributes the gaps to 'unrealistic models of policy making' and failure to provide the support that is required to 'turn desired practices into reality'

7.3 Lack of awareness of the government commitments

This research shows that many stakeholders, particularly parents and practitioners, have a lack of awareness of the 2007 curriculum framework. For instance, apart from three ECE group leaders and the proprietor of one of the private case study setting, the other teachers and parents had no access to or knowledge of government policies or documents that relate to children's learning. While the

government claimed that the policy document was based on the expertise of education specialists, UNICEF, and in collaboration with all line ministries like health, environment and housing, women's affairs, information and communication, finance, agriculture and water resources, and the national planning commission (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013), the findings of this study suggest otherwise. This begs the questions: Who did the government consult? What voices were represented? Were any stakeholders at the grassroots level involved or engaged in policy formation? These questions lead to an overarching question, which may have relevance in other contexts where early childhood policy is being developed: if local stakeholders are not consulted, then how relevant will the policy be?

While knowledge of changes in educational policies and programmes per se may not necessarily guarantee the success of the initiated reform in Imo State schools, it can be argued that failure to effectively engage with and create awareness among stakeholders and the general public was, in part, responsible for its poor implementation and could explain why the process was fraught with huge challenges that have resulted in partial, and in some cases, non-implementation of programmes at the grassroots level. Lack of awareness made it difficult for a majority of the stakeholders in this study to discuss or relate to the policy in terms of its content and its implication for children's learning and development. For effective policy implementation, it is imperative that all educational goals, guidelines, and targets are communicated to stakeholders. This requires creating awareness, effective partnerships, creating knowledge through adequate training on the content and implementation process and for stakeholders in ECE to be actively involved both at the formulation stage when concerns can be expressed and at implementation (see Vargas-Barón, 2005; Yaro et al., 2016). An implication of this finding is that governments must make efforts to assess community and stakeholder awareness in order to provide effective implementation of policy. This study shows that awareness is not guaranteed.

The national policy on education explicitly stated that the government would be responsible for developing and distributing suitable ECE curriculum for nationwide implementation, materials such as the National Policy on education, National Minimum standards, Implementation Guidelines and other relevant materials required for the effective delivery of early years programmes (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013). This study showed that was not the case as all the teachers said they did not feel involved in any way and the Ministry of Education or any other agency never supplied the official documents required for teaching and learning. Some claimed they purchased what they considered suitable from the open market while others said they went to private settings to borrow whatever was available. This has implications in terms of quality and suitability of the materials. It was common to find that almost all of the stakeholders were not versed and were unable to effectively discuss the content or issues addressed in the policy framework or guidelines. This lack of engagement gives credence to critics who have continued to question the uncritical application and transfer of policies and programmes that are based on studies from the global North, to Majority World and have failed to meet the needs of children (Nsamenang, 2006; Penn, 2011; Penn, 2004; Woodhead, 1996).

7.4 Uneven Provision of Resources and Differences in Learning Environments

This study showed that there was a general sense of dissatisfaction with the state of resources in children's learning environments in government settings. Findings from the study showed that resources in seven out of the nine case study settings were of poor quality and failed to meet the standard set in the National Minimum Guidelines. Apart from tables and chairs provided by the government through the universal basic education scheme, all children in ECE had no access to learning materials and did not benefit from the bursary, free books, socks, shoes and bags made available to children in state funded primary schools. This study revealed the challenges stakeholders in state funded settings faced with respect to shared spaces in settings. A majority of the participants in this study expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of security which led to the loss of school properties, vandalism and arson. Many settings were without gates and fences which

made them easily accessible and they act as thoroughfares to unintended users. The study showed that in settings that run double shifts, there was an inability to establish ownership of space. This proved challenging for both the teachers and children as it made it difficult to display children's work and other valuable material for fear of loss. All of these factors contribute to what could be interpreted as low-quality provision in the state settings.

In stark contrast, in the two well-resourced private settings, all stakeholders were satisfied with the learning material and environment provided. This study found a great difference between the classes and learning environments in the two types of settings. All classes in two private settings had good sanitation and toilets, well arranged shelves with children's story books and writing material neatly arranged, children's works displayed, abundant play material, designated play areas, toys of different sizes and for different age groups. This was in sharp contrast when compared with the level of dissatisfaction articulated by stakeholders in all government case study settings where there was lack of toilet facilities, electricity, water, indoors and outdoors play material, designated play areas for children, poor aesthetics, overcrowded classrooms and varied curriculum. However, being a private (for-profit) setting does not guarantee quality of services or materials, as demonstrated in this case study. One of the private settings in this case has a lack of resources and large group sizes.

Only two private settings met the standard stipulated in terms of resources and learning materials but, like the state funded settings, their curriculum was varied, and may have been interpreted in a manner that demonstrates that curriculum cannot be 'imported'. For instance, staff of one of the private settings confirmed that they combined the British, American, Nigerian and Montessori curriculum (which they described as play-based). Parents and teachers from this very setting were proud of the quality of learning based on the 'unique' curriculum yet there isn't a 'US curriculum' as different states in the US have different curricula, and a traditional Montessori approach does not place emphasis on 'play,' per se. This study shows the government's inability to harmonize practice

and a failure to provide a nationally consistent framework for early childhood education. It also shows how imported curricula can be interpreted in ways that are different to their intentions.

Evidence of the importance of quality learning resources and environment in children's learning is well documented. See for instance Montie's longitudinal study, a cross national study that focused on process and structural characteristics of preschool settings and experience in ten countries, Sylva's exploration of the effective provision of pre-schools in Britain and Arnold who focused on how well-designed early childhood programmes can effectively address poverty and exclusion (Arnold et al., 2007; Montie et al., 2006; Sylva et al., 2004). Based on the findings in this study, one could suggest that the learning environment in majority of the case study settings failed to provide or enable stimulating and rich experiences for children. It is also consistent with the views of Osakue, (2011) and Akindele (2012) who indicated that most settings in Nigeria are of poor quality with varied curriculum, poor environment and resources, poor learning conditions, overcrowded classes with poor ventilation

The rationale for government intervention in ECE in Nigeria is premised on the need for equality of access to educational opportunities to all Nigerian children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities (Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, 2005). All stakeholders in state funded settings in this study acknowledged and expressed satisfaction with some of the changes they experienced, including increase in enrolment of children aged 3-5 years in ECE. It was viewed by many as a welcomed development. However, they noted that government provision did not go far enough and was neither free nor fair for all children because it targeted specific age groups. The findings showed that while existing provision may have created access for some low income families who described how challenging and unaffordable it was for them to provide ECE for their families prior to government involvement in Imo State, the findings showed that government funding is not enough. In this case study, government settings failed to ensure equality of educational opportunities for children under the age of three. The 2013 NPE estimates that about

19.98 million children who should have enrolled are out of school and that only 39% of state funded primary schools in Nigeria had complied with the Federal government's directive requesting all schools to incorporate ECE in their settings (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013).

The exclusion of millions of children from ECE contradicts the government's pledge to provide 'unfettered access and equity in education' and a 'good head start' for all children (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013:14,36). It equally contradicts its commitment to the six goals of EFA enshrined in the Dakar frame for action, and falls short of the fair start for children and families demanded by (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007; Myers, 1993). Evidently Nigeria was among the countries that failed to achieve the target of EFA in 2015 and is ranked first on the world's out of school children (UNESCO, 2012b). The disparity in the 'quality' of the provisions in the government settings compared to two of the private settings in this case study also show how quality is available, but not accessible for people who do not have financial resources.

7.5 Human rights v human capital discourses

From a human rights perspective, this study revealed the government's failings with respect to providing meaningful learning experiences for children, protecting children's rights, providing adequate facilities and resources in settings and creating access for children under the age of three in early years education. Further, it shows that human rights arguments do not include a crucial element of the UNCRC: children's right to participation. This case study demonstrates that the arguments for early childhood education in both policy and in the perspectives of stakeholders relates more to human capital discourses which are imbedded within human rights arguments for early childhood education.

Under the UNCRC, all governments are required to 'render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the

development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children (Article 18.2) and enable 'children of working parents have the right to benefit from child care services and facilities for which they are eligible' (Article 18.3, (United Nations, 1989:2). The aim of Article 18.3 is to enable more women get into work. We can see that while article 18 involves the child's right to early education and care, the article is written from a human capital perspective: that the right to child care is not the child's right, but the (working) parent's right. The message is clearly that early education and care is for the purpose of generating human capital in the form of child care for parents who contribute to the economy by working. Nigeria has stated that 'education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges' (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013:13). In line with the objective of IECD in Nigeria, they claim to provide adequate care, supervision and security for children while their parents are at work' (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013:19). This study showed that a majority of stakeholders in private settings were very satisfied with the timing as well as the services rendered as it provided care and safety while parents were at work. As indicated earlier, two of the private settings opened between the hours of 7A.M. and 6 P.M. Official hours of 8A.M. - 1 P.M. in state funded early years settings does not suit the official working hours of 8A.M-5P.M and a number of parents who wish to be in employment. The benefits of early education in these cases are related to discourses of human capital, in the form of parents being able to work.

This study showed that although there was provision for the long days that enabled parents to register children in another setting other than their immediate one the child was registered in, not all parents availed themselves of the opportunity because of the logistics of moving children from one setting to the other during the school or official working hours and procuring new sets of learning materials and uniforms. While the provision of the long day in state funded settings may have been designed to enable parents return to employment, inconsistencies in the government's provisions in

ECE effectively excludes many parents from employment opportunities thus impacting on their productivity and their ability to provide for their families.

In the forward the 2013 national policy document, Prof. Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufai, the then minister of education, reaffirmed the country's commitment to human capital development by saying 'Our covenant with every Nigerian child therefore, is access to quality education relevant to the needs of Nigerian economy. We will nurture the mind to create good society that can compete globally. [...]' (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013: iv) . On page ix of the same document, reference is made to the refocusing and improvement of the quality of education such that the country can achieve Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy goals of transforming the economy, creating wealth, generating employment and poverty reduction. This suggests a human capital argument for investing in ECE in Nigeria.

Many of the studies reviewed for this thesis have shown that there is long term benefit of 'investing' in early childhood education. The studies call for targeted intervention programmes for children 'at risk'. The assumption is that investing in children mitigates future expenses of remedial action. From the human capital point of view, children are prospective human capital and the investment in ECE reduces future corrective expenses (Heckman, 2006; Lynch, 2004; Schweinhart et al., 1993). The national policy on education in Nigeria is also clear on the need for economic empowerment of children to enable the government achieve its economic goals. The findings from this study corroborate existing literature (see Salami, 2016; Akinrotimi & Olowe, 2016; Obiweluzor, 2015; Omotayo et al., 2008 Osakue, 2011) which suggests that ECE is not adequately funded in Nigeria.

This casts doubt on the role of education as a tool of empowerment for the poor and socially marginalised and for the development of an effective work force as suggested in the 2013 National Policy on Education. Some parents in the private settings described government provision as free but of very poor quality where no meaningful learning can take place. As presented earlier in the

literature review of this thesis, the budget and funding for education is said to be very low thus making it difficult for any meaningful provision to be made in ECE. This has implications within the Nigerian context and other contexts where new ECE policies are being implemented. The findings of this study also demonstrate that the discourse of human capital (parents as workers and children as future workers) is imbedded in rights based perspectives.

More than anything else, the findings of this study underscore the need for the government and policy makers in both public and private sectors to refocus and improve on the quality of provision in ECE through improved funding and re-evaluation of existing programmes and services and involving stakeholders who are direct beneficiaries of educational programmes. The aim is to establish what works for children and families, what is needed to be improved and areas where help is needed most. It calls for the design of ambitious policies, effective implementation, and adequate monitoring systems. Focus should be directed towards interventions for disadvantaged children, and those that are at risk of failing, rather than on future corrective measures.

The study showed that despite limited resources in government settings, a majority of the stakeholders expressed gratitude for existing government provision. I found their sense of appreciation quite contradictory. All stakeholders in state schools acknowledged that resources and learning environment were very poor, nevertheless, they consistently made reference to how happy and grateful they were with the government's involvement in the provision for children and prompt payment of teachers' wages. Evidently, provisions, service delivery, and the stakeholders' experiences at the time of this study did not amount to effective and functional ECE and they all had a common desire to see changes or improvement in government provision. Yet, many claimed the little provided made a difference in their lives.

An explanation for this could be found in the level of poverty prevalent in the society as well as their lived experiences or reality. For instance, some stakeholders made reference to how their economic circumstances prevented their children from attending ECE and primary school prior to

the provision in place as at the time of this study. They recounted inaction by the previous government that imposed tuition fees and encouraged settings to charge different levies that kept children out of education because it was unaffordable. In addition, there were situations in which teachers were not paid wages that led to constant strike actions and school closures. For many of the participants in this study, it was the best offer they had ever seen or known. These lived experiences of the stakeholders in this study reflect the paradox of the government's commitment to human rights and claims of human capital development for all citizens. The present level of investment and provision in ECE cannot lead to increased productivity nor produce the equalizing effect or narrowing of the gap between the high income groups and the disadvantaged, marginalized and low income families as suggested in the policy documents.

7.6 What perception do stake holders in Imo State have of the 2007 government policy in relation to affordability of early childhood education and care

The socio-economic background of the parents in this study was a major determinant of the type of settings parents chose for their children. Affluent and middle income families purchased and accessed better quality services in well-resourced settings within the metropolis which charged very high fees but had very low population. State funded settings charged no fees at all and they had very large classes. The poorly resourced private setting outside the metropolis charged fees that were much lower than the other two private settings. Many parents and teachers in state funded settings expressed satisfaction with the availability of free ECE which offered children the opportunity to be in school.

Clearly, lack of choice for many low income families was evident. A good number of parents desired to see change or send their children to private settings with better quality provisions but affordability was a huge concern as a majority made it clear that they could not afford the fees charged by the private sector. The only option available irrespective of the quality it offered was the free but poor quality provision. In contrast, some middle income families interviewed emphasized

that they were mindful of quality of education their children received and types of activities children engaged in. They saw the relationship between the quality of learning and resources available in settings and their children's future attainments. Most of them admitted that the fees charged were high but they found it affordable and were willing to provide the best quality education for their children. This study revealed that the situation of children in ECE in Owerri and those under 3 years who had no access to provision calls for urgent intervention. Some working parents and those willing to get into employment claimed they were unable to do so because of the high cost of purchasing child care places. The implication was that only children whose families could afford the high cost of childcare and education offered by private for profit operators, were guaranteed access to ECE. This finding is consistent with the findings of a 2012 EFA global monitoring report which showed that children from poor Nigerian households are less likely to access ECE (UNESCO, 2012a).

7.7 How do these perceptions match government's policies?

This research question sought to establish if stakeholders' perceptions match or differ from government policy claims. This study showed that despite the rhetoric of unfettered and equal access to education for all children of school age irrespective of their circumstances (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013), stakeholders lived experiences of ECE, are at variance with government's policy commitments or claims. The policy claims to ensure the development of curriculum for nationwide implementation, but this was not evidenced in the case study. The policy claims that there will be a dissemination of the curriculum and other learning materials, but this was not shown. The policy makes a claim that there will be provision of teacher education, but training opportunities are uneven. The policy aims to ensure that that the establishment of private ECE is in accordance with set standards, but this was not shown. The findings of the study did not indicate that there was adequate care and supervision for children of working parents and did not find effective quality control systems.

The 2013 revised national policy on education clearly acknowledged government's failures. For instance, in the section for *The 4-Year Strategic Plan for the Development of the Education Sector: 2011 to 2015*, it stated that governments 'efforts and commitments have suffered setbacks and failed to yield the desired results [.....] and have indeed hindered considerable access to education from early childhood care to the tertiary level' (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013:36). This thesis presented stakeholders' experiences of provision which varied markedly. It equally illuminated significant gaps between policy claims and actual practice in Owerri. The findings show that the policy may have been explicit on the government's determination to achieve the agenda of EFA, MDGs, achievement of the goals of national economic empowerment, high productivity and poverty reduction through the instrument of ECE, but the present structure and provision do not offer stimulating programmes and environment for children's learning. There is high level of inequality, access is far from being universal, there are varied experiences of curricula for children, there is poor funding, high adult/child ratios, large group sizes, inconsistencies in regulation, an inability of parents to return to gain or return to employment, a lack of professional development for the ECE workforce and above all, a poor regulatory system. This does not make for quality provision for children and it marks the government's failure both from a human rights and from a human capital perspective.

The obvious lack of awareness amongst all the stakeholders in this study, is indicative of the fact that they were not involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and services concerning them. Although a majority of the stake holders could describe some visible changes in their children learning, all stakeholders were not aware of the national policy and never received any form of feedback based on the complaints they made in the past. The abolition of PTA meant the stakeholders lost a vital platform for making their voices heard. This highlights the need for the involvement of numerous actors, beneficiaries and implementers at the grassroots level in the policy process as suggested by advocates of the bottom-up approach (see Elmore, 1979, Berman, 1980, Hjern, 1982 cited in Matland, 1995)

7.8 Significance and implications of the study

There is scarcity of research on stakeholders' perspectives on access and quality in ECE in Owerri which creates a gap in our knowledge and understanding of their views and voices in the formulation and implementation of educational policies. Like others, (Yaro et al., 2016, Telli, 2013); Yaro et al., 2016) I consider stakeholders involvement in the analysis and implementation of educational programmes for children highly valuable hence the decision to explore their perspectives. This study used a contextual approach by examining the perspectives of the participants with regard to their experiences with ECE in Owerri. This contextualised perspective underscores how the findings are relevant to the lived experiences of the children, families, and practitioners who live and work in Owerri, and strengthens the relevance that the findings have for these stakeholders, policy makers and future researchers. It is a study that focused on structure and process as dimensions of quality. Quality indicators such as staff training and development, supervision and control of settings, partnership with families as well as resources in the case study settings were analysed. The experiences and different perspectives presented in this study enabled me to piece together the broad issues that underlie access to and quality of provision available to children from birth-five years in the case study settings.

The significance of the study is also in relation to the insights it provides for the implementation of early years policy in other contexts. For example, findings from this study (that indicate lack of awareness and poor provision) could be used by policy makers who are implementing new policy. This could enable them avoid some of the problems that have occurred in Owerri. For example, based on the findings of this study, I would suggest that governments of various states in Nigeria, allow local control of the development of early childhood education and care programmes that suit the needs and the desires of people within their own contexts, rather than importing curricula and ideas from outside of the local context. This involvement and participation was something that was lacking, but desired by participants in this case study, and it is an approach that would be sensitive to the lived experiences of people who participate in the education and care of young people.

This study has also highlighted the tensions within human rights perspectives and human capital arguments imbedded within the UNCRC. From this case study, we can see that the arguments for early childhood education as a ‘right’ almost always concern the right of parents to have care for their children so that they can work, rather than arguing for the rights of children to participate in educational experiences.

7.9 Limitations of the study

In spite of the contribution of this research to knowledge, there are clearly limits to this case study. Most notably, it is limited by incorporating only the views of parents, teachers, and employees of the Ministry of Education, but not the views of children. The perceptions and voices of the children who are essentially at the centre of programme reforms and policies in ECE are important, and could provide further insight. However, involving children as participants in this study was not possible due to time constraints involved with negotiating access and developing relationships with children, which need to be carefully and thoughtfully considered from an ethical standpoint. My limited time in the field restricted my ability to do this, but I believe this would have provided valuable insights into the meanings of early education and care within the context.

Also silent in this case study are the perspectives of non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, and members of the local communities, who could also be considered stakeholders in early childhood education. Although this group of stakeholders was beyond the scope of this study and the data generated was able to meet my research objectives, their non-involvement means their perceptions may still remain unknown.

Another limit of the study is the relatively small sample size. Given the constraints of time and budget, it was not possible to include more than 45 participants. However, the same was considered reasonable to gain insight on participants’ perspectives, and was strengthened by including people from a range of settings. This small sample size is not representative of the population of stakeholders in early years settings in Imo State therefore the findings are not generalizable to the

entire population. However, generalisation was not the goal of the case, rather the case was intended to generate knowledge and understanding of the complexities of ECE in Owerri.

Another limitation of the study with regard to data collection was my inability to collect more than 4 responses to the questionnaire. The reason was that the participants were government employees and this was a delicate and sensitive issue, and these people did not want to be interviewed and very few were willing to provide their perspectives. Therefore the four responses were analysed qualitatively and used to corroborate the data generated from the interviews and observations. Again the respondents did not show that they were willing to be honest about their thoughts on the issues being discussed

Summary

The study of stakeholders' perspectives is significant because of its contribution to the literature in early childhood education literature. Their perspective illuminated the complexities and underlying challenges in accessing ECE in Owerri. Although increased government involvement in ECE was an attempt aimed at harmonizing practice, promoting equitable, affordable and more even quality for children from birth-five years in Nigeria, stakeholders suggest otherwise. The government's failure to provide for children and families resulted in private early childhood provisions, a situation that is a common feature in Nigeria. Another problem in Nigeria and Imo state in particular, is that there is inequitable access and exclusion of disadvantaged and children with disabilities in early years settings. This study also revealed that children under the age of three have no access to provision. Many young children are deprived of their rights, and are missing out on a very important experience in their early lives.

7.10 Recommendations

While stakeholders in state funded settings expressed satisfaction with provision of free education for 3-5 year olds, findings from this study calls for prompt action that would bridge the existing gap between policy and practice and improve the real life experiences of children and families in ECE in Owerri. To achieve that, the following issues must be addressed.

Involvement of stakeholders in the design, planning, and implementation

This study revealed total lack of awareness and non-involvement of ECE beneficiaries in the planning of programmes. The prescriptive and top-down approach employed by the government of Nigeria in the delivery of quality ECE is problematic as it fails to recognize and accommodate the perspectives of various stakeholders directly involved in ECE either as beneficiaries or engaged in the process of policy implementation. Therefore in line with the views of Geyer & Cairney (2015) on public policy design and implementation, this study recommends that existing approach to ECE policies and programmes in Owerri Imo state should be modified in favour of bottom-up approach. From the perspective of Geyer & Cairney, there should be less reliance on centrally determined and target driven programmes. Hence, more freedom should be given to stakeholders in Imo state, who are capable of learning from their personal experiences, adapt to their rapidly-changing environment, set realistic goals, determine the yardstick for measuring success and explore better ways of dealing with perceived failures. This is very important because as Walker observed, policies are not static, rather, they are modified or adjusted from time to time, 'in the context of learning, debate, contention among a variety of stakeholders, changes in the world and in society' (Walker et al., 2001: 283). Again there could be issues within the context of implementation which policy designers at the macro level have little or no control over (see Berman, 1978, cited in Matland, 1995).

Consistent with the literature (Elmore, 1979; Berman, 1980; Hjern, 1982 cited in Matland, 1995), this study recommends that the numerous actors, beneficiaries and interest groups at the grassroots

level in Nigeria in general and Imo state in particular, be involved in ECE policy implementation. These street-level bureaucrats are more conversant with the day-to-day challenges encountered at the implementation stage. This study therefore calls for an inclusive approach in the development of children's programmes and policies; an approach that begins with awareness creation within the context of the change. Indeed, awareness should be a component of involvement. This involves engaging stakeholder in the planning, design, and delivery of programmes at all stages. If all stakeholders are involved in planning for early childhood programmes, then the suitability of the programmes will more likely serve the needs of communities. Further, awareness of the availability of programmes and awareness of opportunities to be involved also need to be in place. This could take the form of enlightenment campaigns and training sessions that would educate parents, teachers, community groups and facilitators on the objectives of the ECE policy framework and guidelines on its implementation. Home visits by officials of the Ministry of Education and other co-ordinating agencies, should be part of awareness creation. The aim is to mobilize enough support and create the sense of ownership and commitment amongst the stakeholders.

This requires on-going evaluation and reviews of ECE programmes in Nigeria and Imo state in particular. Greater efforts are required on the part of government to ensure that there is shared understanding of the purpose of educational programmes, and that there is greater participation or involvement of stakeholders at a grassroots level. Again, the government should set realistic and achievable goals for the implementation of programmes, embark on effective distribution of all relevant materials, and ensure that the policies and programmes designed have relevance to the local context. Further, they must ensure that the programmes are inclusive and address the actual needs of all children and families. Evidence informing change should be scrutinized and should emanate from the immediate environment where change is required. This underscores the need for effective monitoring and quality control system to be put in place.

Improve quality through increased budgetary allocation

In spite of the progress made, the poor state of all ECE settings requires urgent attention and increased budgetary allocation. The poor state of resources in all six government funded settings in the study was a confirmation that the funding pattern in place was grossly inadequate for achieving the desired outcomes for children **in Imo state**. It calls for prioritizing and channelling investment to where it is required most for improved service delivery. Programme evaluation is paramount. This appraisal will highlight failings and strengths, what should improve and what should be repealed. Again this requires the full involvement or participation of a range of stakeholders.

Workforce Development

Research has shown the importance of qualified workforce in the delivery of high quality education (Sylva et al., 2004, Education International, 2009, OECD, 2011a). The 2004 National Policy on Education in Nigeria indicated that no education system can grow beyond the quality of its teachers thus confirming the significance teachers in the implementation of the policy. Yet, this study showed that only one out of the twenty teachers involved in this study had a qualification in ECE. It also showed disparities in the professional development and conditions of service of teachers. To ensure teachers' efficiency and commitment to the change process, the government's effort should be channelled towards enhancing the welfare of teachers, and to boost the status and professionalization of the ECE workforce. This study showed inconsistencies in training opportunities for the teachers. Therefore, it is recommended that the provision of in-service training be addressed and that initial teacher training programmes be given urgent attention.

7.11 Suggestions for further research

This case study approach was very useful for exploring the lived experiences of some participants in a group of pre-schools in Owerri Imo State. While the study may have illuminated the complexities of accessing provision in ECE for children from birth to 5 years further studies that incorporate children's views in relation to provision are recommended. This could help to create a

space for all voices to be heard and could shift the emphasis from human capital discourses to participatory rights discourses with regard to early childhood education and care within Nigerian national context and in particular Owerri.

One of the limitations of this study is the sample sizes. This case study focuses on a small group of stakeholders within a specific geographical area in Imo State. Further studies or a national survey which explores multiple perspectives in other local government areas in Imo state and other states in Nigeria are therefore recommended. This would establish if their experiences of the national policy in ECE in relation to process and structure elements of quality in ECE will be consistent with the views of the participants in this case study, thus generating a more generalizable findings.

Amongst other concerns, this study reveals disparities and inconsistencies in teacher professional development. Further research could be funded to address more closely, existing teacher training programmes, ECE workforce requirements as well as the short fall in teacher demand and supply in. Findings of such research could be relevant for improving future funding and development of ECE workforce in Imo state,

NPE explicitly expresses the government's determination to harmonize practice. Hence, the 2007 IECD curriculum framework was designed to achieve a nationally consistent standard for all children in ECE. Yet evidence from this study suggests that curriculum and practice in all the case study settings varied. Further study that evaluates or examines more closely, the effectiveness, weaknesses and challenges of the current policy is recommended.

Bibliography

- Aboud, F.E. (2006) Evaluation of an Early Childhood Preschool Program in Rural Bangladesh. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 21(1) pp.46-60. DOI: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.01.008.
- Adebisi, R, Iroha, N., Amwe, R. & Rasaki, S. (2014) Early Childhood Assessment: Implications for the Development of Responsive Readiness Skills, Child Care and Early Intervention In Nigeria. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 4 (6) pp. 85-97. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v4-i6/928>.
- Aidoo, A.A. (2008) Positioning ECD Nationally: Trends in Selected African Countries. In: Garcia, M., Pence, A. & Evans, E.L. (eds.) *Africa's Future, Africa's Challenges: Early Childhood Care and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, D.C. World Bank. Pp.29-49
- Ajani Olubunmi, I.Y. & Babalola D. A. (2009) Welfare of Rural Households in Imo State, Nigeria. *Agricultural Journal*. 4(5) pp. 221-225. Available at: <http://medwelljournals.com/abstract/?doi=aj.2009.221.225>
- Akanbi, G.O. (2012) Political Dispensation and its Effects on the Early Childhood and Primary Education in Nigeria. *Journal of Sociological Research*. 3(2) pp. 357-375. Available at: <http://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/jsr/article/viewFile/2485/2181>(Accessed 17/6/14)
- Akinbote, O. & Alhassan, A.B. (2011) *Issues in Early Childhood and Primary Education in Nigeria*. Available at: <http://64.114.230.153:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/1360> (Accessed 29/5/14)
- Akindele, M.I. (2011) The Challenges Facing Early Childhood Care, Development and Education (ECCDE) in an Era of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. 39(2) pp.161-167. DOI: 10.1007/s10643-011-0443-3.
- Akindele M.I. (2016) Financial Allocation to Education: Trends, Issues and Way Forward in Nigeria. *Journal Plus Education/Education Plus*. 14(1) Available at: <http://uav.ro/jour/index.php/jpe/article/view/633> (Accessed: 20/2/17).
- Akindele, I. (2012) Poverty in Early Childhood Care, Development and Education: The Nigeria's case. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education Research*. 1(3) pp.20-36.
- Akinrotimi, A.A. & Olowe, P.K. (2016) Challenges in Implementation of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: The Way Forward. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 7(7) pp.33-38.
- Alabi, A.T. & Ijaiya, N.Y.S. (2014) Funding Strategies and Sustenance of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: The Way Forward. *European Scientific Journal*. 8(1).
- Ali-Akpajiak Sofu, C.A. & Pyke, T. (2003) *Measuring Poverty in Nigeria*. Great Britain: Oxfam.
- Allen, S. & Whalley, M.E. (2010) *Supporting Pedagogy and Practice in Early Years Settings*. London: SAGE.
- Altrichter, H. (2008) *Teachers Investigate their Work: An Introduction to Action Research across the Professions*. (2nd ed.) London: Routledge.

- Amakievi, O. I. G. (2013) Historical analysis of federal government innovations in early childhood education in Nigeria, 1977-2008. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences*. 3(1) pp.63-84. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=85324428&site=ehost-live> (Accessed: 1/9/15).
- Aminu, A.A., Tella, C.M. & Mbaya, P.Y. (2012) Public Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigeria. *Public Policy and Administrative Research* (5) pp.57-62.
- Ang, L. (2012) *Vital Voices for Vital Years: A Study of Leaders' Perspective on Improving the Early Childhood Sector in Singapore*. Lynn and Lien Foundation.
- Anyaegebu, R., Christman, D.E. & Jinpu, C. (2004) The Challenges of Rural Education in Nigeria: Potential Lessons from China. 1(2) pp.160-174.
- Arnold, C. (2004) Positioning ECCD in the 21st Century. Coordinators' Notebook: An international Resources for Early Childhood Development. Number 28. Toronto, ON: Consultative Group on Early Childhood Development.
- Arnold, C., Bartlett, K., Gowani, S. & Merali, R. (2007) *Is Everybody Ready? Readiness, Transition and Continuity: Reflections and Moving Forward. Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, Number 41*. Bernard van Leer Foundation. The Hague, The Netherlands. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED522694> (Accessed 19/8/14).
- Association for the Development of Education in Africa, (2005) *Working Group on Early Childhood Development*.
- Bailey Jr, D.B. (2006) Are Critical Periods Critical for Early Childhood Education? *Early Years Education: Curriculum Issues in Early Childhood Education*. 2(3), p.28.
- Bailey Jr., D.B. (2002) Are Critical Periods Critical for Early Childhood Education? The Role of Timing in Early Childhood Pedagogy. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 17(3) Pp.281-294. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(02\)00165-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(02)00165-5).
- Ballou, D. & Podgursky, M.J. (1997) *Teacher Pay and Teacher Quality*. Kalamazoo, MI: W. E. Upjohn Institute.
- Barkenbus, J. (1998) Expertise and the Policy Cycle. *University of Tennessee*. Available at <http://www.gdrc.org/decision/policy-cycle.pdf>. (Accessed: 30/7/2017).
- Barnett, W.S. (2003) Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications. NIEER Preschool Policy Matters, Issue 2. Available at: <http://nieer-www1.rutgers.edu/resources/policybriefs/2.pdf> (Accessed: 19/3/15).
- Barnett, W.S. (2008) Why Governments Should Invest in Early Childhood Education. *CESifo-DICE Report*. Journal for Institutional Comparisons, 6(2) pp. 9-14.
- Bello, A. & Suleman, A. (2011) The Challenge of Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in IDB Member Countries in The Post-Crisis World. *IDB Occasional Paper no.16*. Saudi Arabia: Islamic Development Bank.

Belsky, J., Burchinal, M., McCartney, K., Vandell, D.L., Clarke-Stewart, K. & Owen, M.T. (2007) Are There Long-Term Effects of Early Child Care? *Child Development*. 78(2) pp.681-701. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01021.x.

Bennett, J., Gordon, J. & Edelmann, J. (2012) Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for Children from Disadvantaged Backgrounds: Findings from a European Literature Review and two case studies. Final Report. Brussels: European Commission.

Bennett, J. (2011) Early Childhood Education and Care Systems: Issue of Tradition and Governance. *Encyclopaedia on Early Childhood Development*. Available at: <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/child-care-early-childhood-education-and-care/according-experts/early-childhood-education-and-care>. (Accessed: 12/3/14).

Bennett, J. (2010) *Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report: Europe and North America*. Paris: UNESCO.

Berris, R. & Miller, E. (2011) How Design of the Physical Environment Impacts Early Learning: Educators and Parents Perspectives. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*. 36(4) Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=85880315&site=ehost-live> (Accessed 16/4/15).

Biddle, B.J. & Berliner, D.C. (2002) Small Class Size and its Effects. *Educational Leadership*. 59(5) pp.12-23. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=6503344&site=ehost-live> (Accessed: 29/4/15).

Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Goldstein, H. & Martin, C. (2003) Are Class Size Differences Related to Pupils' Educational Progress and Classroom Processes? Findings from the Institute of Education Class Size Study of Children Aged 5–7 Years. *British Educational Research Journal*. 29(5) pp.709-730.

Blau, D.M. (1997) The Production of Quality in Child Care Centers. *Journal of Human Resources*. Pp.354-387.

Blau, D.M. (2000) The Production of Quality in Child-Care Centres: Another look. *Applied Developmental Science*. 4(3) pp.136-148. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=3384255&site=ehost-live> (Accessed: 29/4/15).

Boyden, J. (1990) Childhood and the Policy-Makers: A Comparative Perspective on the Globalization of Childhood, In: James, A. & Prout, A. (eds.) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Routledge Falmer. Pp.190-216.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 3(2) pp.77-101.

Bredekamp, S. (1987) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programmes Serving Children Birth through Age 8*. National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

British Council Nigeria & UKaid, (2012) *Gender in Nigeria Report 2012: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria: Issues, Policies, Action*. British Council Nigeria. Available at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org.ng/files/2012/12/GenderReport-full.pdf>. Accessed 12/3/2016).

Britto, P.R., Yoshikawa, H. & Boller, K. (2011) Quality of Early Childhood Development Programmes in Global Contexts: Rationale for Investment, Conceptual Framework and Implications for Equity. *Social Policy Report*. 25(2) pp.1-31. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/881470274?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 02/1/12).

Brooker, L. & Woodhead, M. (. (2010) *Culture and Learning. Early Childhood in Focus*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.

Bruer, J.T. (1999) *The Myth of the First Three Years: A New Understanding of Early Brain Development and Lifelong Learning*. Riverside, NJ: Simon and Schuster. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/62391191?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 24/1/15)

Bryman, A. (2001) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burchinal, M., Howes, C. & Kontos, S. (2002) Structural Predictors of Child Care Quality in Child Care Homes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 17(1) pp. 87-105.

Burchinal, M.R., Roberts, J.E., Riggins, R., Zeisel, S.A., Neebe, E. & Bryant, D. (2000) Relating Quality of Center-Based Child Care to Early Cognitive and Language Development Longitudinally. *Child Development*. 71(2) pp.339-357. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/62444982?accountid=13578> . (Accessed: 23/2/14).

Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E. & Chadwick, B. (2008) Analysing and Presenting Qualitative Data. *British Dental Journal*. 204(8) pp.429-432.

Burns, R.B. (2000) *Introduction to Research Methods*. (4th ed.) London: Sage Publications.

Center for Developing Child at Harvard University (2007) A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behaviour, and Health for Vulnerable Children. Cambridge, MA: Center for Child Developing Child at Harvard.

Central Intelligence Agency (2017) *The World Fact Book: Nigeria*. CIA. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>. (Accessed 12/04/17).

Central Intelligence Agency (2012) *The World Fact Book: Nigeria*. CIA. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>. (Accessed: 21/1/17).

Clemens, M.A., Kenny, C.J. & Moss, T.J. (2007) The Trouble with MDGs: Confronting Expectations of Aid and Development Success. *World Development*. 35(5) pp.735-751.

Coates, E.A. & Faulkner, D. (2013) *International Perspectives on Progress, Change and Development in Early Childhood Education and Care, 1993 to 2013*. DOI: 10.1080/09669760.2013.832944 .

Cohen, L., Bell, R.C., Manion, L. & Morrison, R.B. (2011) *Research Methods in Education*. (7th ed.) Abingdon: Routledge.

- Cohen, L., Morrison, K. & Manion, L. (2000) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Copple, C. & Bredekamp, S. (2009) *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programmes Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8. Third Edition*. National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington, D.C. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/742858253?accountid=13578>. (Accessed 18/12/36)
- Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. (2012) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five approaches*. London: Sage Publications
- Creswell, J.W. (2009) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cryer, D. (1999) Defining and Assessing Early Childhood Program Quality. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 563(1) pp.39-55.
- Cryer, D., Tietze, W., Burchinal, M., Leal, T. & Palacios, J. (1999) Predicting process quality from structural quality in preschool programmes: A cross-country comparison. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 14(3) pp.339-361. DOI:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(99\)00017-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(99)00017-4).
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. & Pence, A.R. (1999) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Postmodern Perspectives*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. & Pence, A.R. (2007) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of Evaluation*. London: Routledge.
- Dahlberg, G., Moss, P. & Pence, A.R. (2007b) *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Languages of Evaluation*. London: Routledge. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=184336&site=ehost-live> (Accessed: 27/3/2015)
- Dalli, C., White, E.J., Rockel, J., Duhn, I., Buchana, E., Davidson, S., Ganly, S., Kus, L. & Wang, B. (2011) *Quality Early Childhood Education for Under-Two-Year-Old: What should it Look Like? A Literature Review*. New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Dembélé, M. & Oviawe, J. (2007) Introduction: Quality education in Africa – international commitments, local challenges and responses. *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft*. 53(5) pp.473-483. DOI: 10.1007/s11159-007-9063-y.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.
- Detrick, S., Doek, J.E. & Cantwell, N. (1992) *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Guide to the "Travaux Préparatoires"*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Dolowitz, D.P. & Marsh, D. (2000) Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making. *Governance*. 13(1) pp.5-23. DOI: 10.1111/0952-1895.00121.
- Dolowitz, D. & Marsh, D. (1996) Who Learns What from Whom: A Review of The Policy Transfer Literature. *Political Studies*. 44(2) pp.343-357. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.1996.tb00334.x.
- Dolton, P. & Van der Klaauw, W. (1999) The Turnover of Teachers: A Competing Risks Explanation. *Review of Economics and Statistics*. 81(3) pp.543-550.
- Dolton, P. & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, O.D. (2011) If You Pay Peanuts Do You Get Monkeys? A Cross-Country Analysis of Teacher Pay and Pupil Performance. *Economic Policy*. 26(65) pp.5-55. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-0327.2010.00257.x.
- Dupuis, S.L. (1999) Naked Truths: Towards a Reflexive Methodology in Leisure Research. *Leisure Sciences*. 21(1) pp.43-64. DOI: 10.1080/014904099273282.
- Easterly, W. (2009) How the Millennium Development Goals are Unfair to Africa. *World Development*. 37(1) pp.26-35. DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.02.009.
- Education International, (2010) *Early Childhood Education: A Global Scenario*. Brussels: Education International.
- Education International, (2009) *Education for all by 2015: Education International's Response to the Global Monitoring Report, 2009*. Brussels, Belgium. Education International.
- Edward, M. & Konstantinos, P. (2006) *Early Childhood Care and Education: International Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Eisenhardt, K.M. & Graebner, M.E. (2007) Theory Building from Cases: Opportunities and Challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*. 50(1) pp.25-32.
- Ejeh, M.U.C. (2006) Pre-primary Education in Nigeria: Policy Implementation and Problems. *Elementary Education*. 5(1) pp.58-64.
- Ejiogu, U., Okezie, A.I. & Nwosu, C. (2013) Causal Relationship between Nigeria Government Budget Allocation to the Education Sector and Economic Growth. *Discourse Journal of Educational Research*. 1(8) pp.54-64. (Accessed: 4/ 12/ 2015).
- Elfer, P., Goldschmied, E. & Selleck, D.Y. (2012) *Key Persons in the Early Years: Building Relationships for Quality Provision in Early Years Settings and Primary Schools*. (2nd ed.) London: Routledge.

- Emenator, F.U. & Akanwa, P.C. (2007) *From Land of Hope to Eastern Heartland: Government and People of Imo State from 1976-2006*. Owerri: BAF Communication.
- Engle, P.L., Fernald, L.C.H., Alderman, H., Rehrman, J., O'Gara, C., Yousafzai, A., de Mello, M.C., Hidrobo, M., Ulkuer, N., Ertem, I. & Iltus, S. (2011) Strategies for reducing inequalities and improving developmental outcomes for young children in low-income and middle-income countries. *Lancet*. 378(9799) pp.1339-1353. DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60889-1.
- Epstein, A.S., Schweinhart, L.J., DeBruin-Parecki, A. & Robin, K.B. (2004) *Preschool Assessment: A Guide to Developing a Balanced Approach*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Childhood Research.
- Epstein, J.L., Coates, L., Salinas, K.C., Sanders, M.G. & Simon, B.S. (1997) *School, Family and Community Partnerships*. San Francisco: Corwin Press.
- European Commission Childcare Network. (2004) *Quality in Early Learning and Child Care Services*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit.
- Evans, J.L., Meyers, R.G. & Ilfeld, E.M. (2000) *Early Childhood Counts: A Programming Guide on Early Childhood Care for Development*. Washington DC: World Bank Learning Resources Series.
- Eyben, R. (2006) The Road Not Taken: International Aid's Choice of Copenhagen over Beijing. *Third World Quarterly*. 27(4) pp.595-608. DOI: 10.1080/01436590600720793.
- Federal Government of Nigeria, (2004) *National Policy on Education*. Nigeria: NERDC.
- Federal Ministry of Education, (2009a) *Road Map for the Nigerian Education Sector: Consultative Draft*. Abuja: NERDC.
- Federal Ministry of Education, (2009b) *Road Map for the Nigerian Education Sector: Consultative Draft*. Abuja: NERDC.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (1998) *National Policy on Education*. Yaba Lagos, Nigeria: NERDC.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (1977) *National Policy on Education*. Lagos, Nigeria: Federal Ministry of Information, Printing Division.
- Fimyar, O. (2014) What is Policy? In Search of Frameworks and Definitions for Non-Western Contexts. *Educate*. 14(3) pp.6-21.
- Finn, J.D. (2002) Small Classes in American Schools: Research, Practice, and Politics. *Phi Delta Kappan*. 83(7) pp.551-560.
- Fukuda-Parr, S. (2008) *Are the MDGs Priority in Development Strategies and Aid Programmes? Only Few are!* Paper Provided by International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth in its Series. Working Paper Number 48. Brasilia: UNDP International Poverty Centre for Inclusive Growth.
- Gabriel, A.O.I. (2013) Historical Analysis of Federal Government Innovations in Early Childhood Education in Nigeria, 1977-2008. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business & Social Sciences*. 3(1) pp.63-84. Available at:

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=85324428&site=ehost-live>
(Accessed: 12/12/2015).

Gbenu, J. (2012) Educational Planning and Local Community Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*. 3(6) pp.850-855.

Geertz, C. (1973) Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture, In: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books. Pp.3-30.

Geyer, R. & Cairney, P. (2015) *Handbook on Complexity and Public Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Glaser, B.G. & Holton, J. (2004) Remodelling Grounded Theory. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 5(2).

Glass, G.V., Cahen, L., Smith, M.L. & Filby, N. (1982) *School Class Size: Research and Policy*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Glass, G.V. & Smith, M.L. (1979) Meta-Analysis of Research on Class Size and Achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 1(1) pp.2-16.

Golafshani, N. (2003) Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*. 8(4) pp.597-606.

Gomm, R., Hammersley, M. & Foster, P. (2000) *Case Study Method: Key Texts, Key Issues*. London: Sage.

Gormley, W.T.J., Gayer, T., Phillips, D. & Dawson, B. (2005) The Effects of Universal Pre-K on Cognitive Development. *Developmental Psychology*. 41(6) pp.872-884. DOI: 10.1037/0012-1649.41.6.872.

Grantham-McGregor, S., Yin, B.C., Cueto, S., Glewwe, P., Richter, L. & Strupp, B. (2007) Child Development in Developing Countries: Developmental Potential in the first 5 years for Children in Developing Countries. *Lancet*. 369(9555) pp.60-70. Available at:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=23745608&site=ehost-live>.
Accessed: 14/5/14)

Gray, D.E. (2004) *Doing Research in the Real World*. London: Sage.

Guba, E.G. (1981) ERIC/ECTJ Annual Review Paper: Criteria for Assessing the Trustworthiness of Naturalistic Inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Development*. 29(2) pp.75-91. Available at:
<http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/63644131?accountid=13578>. (Accessed 14/5/14).

Guillemin, M. & Gillam, L. (2004) Ethics, Reflexivity, and Ethically Important Moments in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 10(2) pp.261-280.

Hallsworth, M. (2011) Policy-making in the real world. *Political Insight*. 2(1) pp.10-12.

Hammersley, M. (2000) Taking Sides Against Research: An Assessment of the Rationales for Partisanship. In Hammersley, M. (ed.) *Taking Sides in Social Research: Essays on Partnership and Bias*. London Routledge.

- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. (3rd ed.) Abingdon: Routledge.
- Hanushek, E.A. (1999) Some Findings from an Independent Investigation of the Tennessee STAR Experiment and from other Investigations of Class Size Effects. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 21(2) pp.143-163.
- Hanushek, E.A. (2011) The Economic Value of Higher Teacher Quality. *Economics of Education Review*. 30(3) pp.466-479. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.12.006> .
- Heckman, J.J. (2006) Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children. *Science*. 312(5782) pp.1900-1902. DOI: 10.1126/science.1128898.
- Herzenberg, S., Price, M. & Bradley, D. (2005) *Losing Ground in Early Childhood Education: Declining Workforce Qualifications in an Expanding Industry, 1979-2004*. Economic Policy Institute Washington, DC.
- Hodges, A. (2001) *Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria: A Wake-Up Call: Situation Assessment and Analysis*. Abuja: National Planning Commission /UNICEF.
- Hor, K. (2012) An Advocacy Journey Towards Education for Sustainable Development in Singapore. In: *Leadership and Advocacy for ECCD Seminar: Global Leaders for Asia and the Pacific (GLAP)*. pp.7-10.
- Howes, C., Phillips, D.A. & Whitebook, M. (1992) Thresholds of Quality: Implications for the Social Development of Children in Center-Based Child Care. *Child Development*. 63(2) pp.449. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8624.ep9207061023 .
- Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Pianta, R., Bryant, D., Early, D., Clifford, R. & Barbarin, O. (2008) Ready to Learn? Children's Pre-Academic Achievement in Pre-Kindergarten Programmes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 23(1) pp.27-50. DOI: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.05.002 .
- Hubbard, G., Backett-Milburn, K. & Kemmer, D. (2001) Working with Emotion: Issues for the Researcher in Fieldwork and Teamwork. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. 4(2) pp.119-137. DOI: 10.1080/136455701750158886 .
- Hulme, D. (2009) *Global Poverty Reduction and The Millennium Development Goals: a Short History of the World's Biggest Promise*. Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper (2009). Manchester: Brooks World Poverty Institute, The University of Manchester.
- Huntsman, L. (2008) Determinants of Quality in Child Care: A Review of the Research Evidence. *New South Wales, Australia: Centre for Parenting and Research, New South Wales Department of Community Services*.
- Igbokwe, C.O., Piate, R.C. & Akpan, B. (2015) Creating a Violent-Free Culture in Nigeria: A Child Rearing Approach. *US-China Education Review*. 5(3) pp.147-166.
- Igbuzor, O. (2006) The State of Education in Nigeria. *Economic and Policy Review*. 12(3).

Ighalo, O.S. (2015) The National Minimum Standard on Early Child Care Centers (ECCC) in Nigeria and the Status of Pre-Primary Education in Ughwumwode Local Government Area of Edo State. *American Journal of Educational Research*. 3(4) pp.399-405. DOI: 10.12691/education-3-4-3.

Imam, H. (2012) Educational Policy in Nigeria from the Colonial Era to the Post-Independence Period. *Italian Journal of Education*. 4(1), pp.181-204. DOI:10.14658/pupj-ijse-2012-1-8.

International Labour Organization, (2012) *Rights Beginnings: Early Childhood Education and Educators. Report for Discussion at the Global Dialogue Forum on Conditions of Personnel in Early Childhood Education (22–23 February 2012)*. Geneva: International Labour Office, Sectoral Activities Department.

International Monetary Fund (2013a) *Country Report: Nigeria. No.13/116*. Washington, DC. International Monetary Fund Publication Service.

International Monetary Fund, (2013b) *The IMF and the World Bank*. Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund Publication Service.

Izuchukwu, O. (2011) Analysis of the Contribution of Agricultural Sector on the Nigerian Economic Development. *World Review of Business Research*. 1(1) pp.191-200.

Jalongo, M.R., Fennimore, B.S., Pattnaik, J., Laverick, D.M., Brewster, J. & Mutuku, M. (2004) Blended Perspectives: A Global Vision for High-Quality Early Childhood Education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. 32(3) pp.143-155.

Jann, W. & Wegrich, K. (2007) Theories of the Policy Cycle. In: Frank Fisher, Gerald Miller & Mara S. Sidney (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics and Methods*. New York: CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group. pp.43-62.

Johnson, B.R. (2011) Do We Need Paradigms? A Mixed Methods Perspective. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*. 24(2) pp.31-40.

Johnson, P. & Kossykh, Y. (2008) *Early Years, Life Chances and Equality: A Literature Review. Report 7*. Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Johnson, R. & Waterfield, J. (2004) Making Words Count: The Value of Qualitative Research. *Physiotherapy Research International*. 9(3) pp.121-131. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=15613313&site=ehost-live> (Accessed: 13/10/2015)

Justin W. van Fleet, Kevin, W. & Laure, G. (2012) *Africa Learning Barometer*. Center for Universal Education: Brookings Institute.

Kagitcibasi, C., Sunar, D. & Bekman, S. (2001) Long-Term Effects of Early Intervention: Turkish Low-Income Mothers and Children. *Applied Developmental Psychology*. 22pp.333-361. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-3973\(01\)00071-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-3973(01)00071-5)

Kamerman, S.B. (2006) *A Global History of Early Childhood Education and Care [Background Paper for EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007]*. Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

- Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R. & Pessach, L. (2009) Power Relations in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research*. 19(2) pp.279-289. DOI: 10.1177/1049732308329306.
- Katz, L.G. (1998) International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education: Lessons from My Travels. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*. 15(1) Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/62486385?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 2/2/2013)
- Khor, M. (2005) Responding to the Globalisation Challenge: A Perspective from the South. In: *Eleventh Meeting of the Intergovernmental Follow-Up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (IFCC-XI) Havana, Cuba, 21-23 March 2005*. pp.1-66.
- Ki-Moon, B. (2010) Keeping the Promise: A Forward-Looking Review to Promote an Agreed Action Agenda to Achieve The Millennium Development Goals by 2015. United Nations General Assembly. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/62C31608D19F702C492576E90004F0-Full_Reprot.pdf (Accessed: 29/7/2015)
- Klein, L. & Knitzer, J. (2006) *Effective Preschool Curricula and Teaching Strategies. Pathways to Early Success- Issue Brief No. 2*. New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University.
- La Paro, K.M., Thomason, A.C., Lower, J.K., Kintner-Duffy, V.L. & Cassidy, D.J. (2012) Examining the Definition and Measurement of Quality in Early Childhood Education: A Review of Studies Using the ECERS-R from 2003 to 2010. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*. 14(1) Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/1140131452?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 3/3/2015)
- Lamb, M. E. (1998). Nonparental Child Care: Context, Quality, Correlates, and Consequences. In: Damon, W., Sigel, I. E. & Renninger K. A. (eds.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. 4. Child Psychology in Practice*. New York: Willey. pp. 73-133.
- LeVine, R.A. (2004) Challenging Expert Knowledge: Findings from an Africa Study of Infant Care and Development. In: Gielen, U.P. & Roopnarine, J. (eds.) *Childhood and Adolescence: Cross-cultural perspectives and applications*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. pp.149-165.
- LeVine, R.A. & New, R.S. (. (2008) *Anthropology and Child Development: A Cross-Cultural Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Denzin, N.K. (1998) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA; London: Sage.
- Lodge, M. & Hood, C. (2002) Pavlovian Policy Responses to Media Feeding Frenzies? Dangerous Dogs Regulation in Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*. 10(1) pp.1-13.
- Lynch, R. (2004) *Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Development*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.
- Mackay, M. (2011) Understanding and Applying Basic Public Policy Concepts. University of Guelph. Available at www.uoguelph.ca/omafra_partnership/ktt/en/worktogether/resources/understandingandapplyingbasicpublicconcepts.pdf. (Accessed: 1/9/17)

- MacNaughton, G. (2004) The Politics of Logic in Early Childhood Research: A Case of the Brain, Hard Facts, Trees and Rhizomes. *Australian Educational Researcher*. 31(3) pp.87-104.
- Maduewesi, E.J. (2005) *Benchmarks and Global Trends in Education*. Enugu City: Sylva Influence Enterprises.
- Maduewesi, E.J. (1999) *Early Childhood Education: Theory and Practice*. Lagos: Macmillan Nigerian Publishers.
- Makoju, G., Obanya, P., Nwangwu, R., Fagbulu, A., Aderogba, F., Ayuodele, S., Olapeju, O., Yusufu, R. & Kalu, K. (2005) Nigeria Education Sector Diagnosis: A Framework for Re-Engineering the Education Sector. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.
- Matland, R.E. (1995) Synthesizing the Implementation Literature: The Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Policy Implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. 5(2) pp.145-174.
- Mathers, S., Singler, R. & Karemaker, A. (2012) Improving Quality in the Early Years: A Comparison of Perspectives and Measures. *Daycare Trust and University of Oxford*. pp.2-13.
- Maxwell, L.E. (2007) Competency in Child Care Settings the Role of the Physical Environment. *Environment and Behavior*. 39(2) pp.229-245.
- McCain, M. & Mustard, J.F. (1999) *Reversing the Real Brain Drain: Early Years Study Final Report*. Toronto: The Canadian Institute for Advanced Science.
- McKey, R.H., Condelli, L., Ganson, H., Barrett, B.J., McConkey, C. & Planz, M.C. (1985) *The Impact of Head Start on Children, Families, and Communities*. Washington, D.C.: Head Start Evaluation Synthesis and Utilization Project.
- Melhuish, E. (2014) The Impact of Early Childhood Education and Care on Improved Wellbeing. "If You Could Do One Thing...."Nine Local Action to Reduce Health Inequalities (pp.33-43). London, United Kingdom: British Academy.
- Melhuish, E. & Barnes, J. (2012) Preschool programmes for the general population. In Tremblay, R.E, Boivin, M. & Peters, R.D. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia on Early Childhood Development*. Montreal, Canada: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development.
- Melhuish, E. & Petrogiannis, K. (2006) *Early Childhood Care & Education: International Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Miedel, W.T. & Reynolds, A.J. (1999) Parent Involvement in Early Intervention for Disadvantaged Children: Does it Matter? *Journal of School Psychology*. 37(4) pp.379-402. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405\(99\)00023-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405(99)00023-0).
- Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods*. London: Sage.
- Miller, T. & Bell, L. (2002) Consenting to What? Issues of Access, Gate-Keeping and 'Informed' Consent. *Ethics in Qualitative Research*. pp.53-69.

- Monaghan, K. (2012) Early Child Development Policy: The Colonization of the World's Childrearing practices? In: Twum-Danso Imoh, A. & Ame, R. (eds.) *Childhoods at the Intersection of the Local and the Global*, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. pp.56-74.
- Montie, J.E., Xiang, Z. & Schweinhart, L.J. (2006) Preschool experience in 10 countries: Cognitive and language performance at age 7. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 21(3) pp.313-331. DOI: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.07.007.
- Moore, G.T. (1987) *The Physical Environment and Cognitive Development in Child-Care Centers*. In: Weinstein, C. & David, T. (eds.) *Spaces for Children*. New York: Plenum. pp.41-72.
- Moore, G.T. & Sugiyama, T. (2007) The Children's Physical Environment Rating Scale (CP ERS): Reliability and Validity for Assessing the Physical Environment of Early Childhood Educational Facilities. *Children Youth and Environments*. 17(4) Pp.24-53.
- Morrison, J.W., Storey, P. & Zhang, C. (2011) Accessible Family Involvement in Early Childhood Programmes. *Dimensions of Early Childhood* 39 (3): 21–26.
- Moss, P. & Dahlberg, G. (2008) Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care-Languages of Evaluation. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*. 5(1) pp.3-12.
- Moss, P. & Penn, H. (1996) *Transforming Nursery Education*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Moss, P. & Pence, A.R. (1994) *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New Approaches to Defining Quality*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Moss, P., Pence, A.R. & Ebrary, I. (1994) *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New Approaches to Defining Quality*. London: P. Chapman.
- Murnane, R., Singer, J.D., Willett, J.B., Kemple, J. & Olsen, R. (2009) *Who Will Teach?: Policies that Matter*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Mustard, J.F. (2006) Experience-based brain development: Scientific underpinnings of the importance of early child development in a global world. In: Young, M.E. & Richardson, L.M. (eds.) *Early Child Development: From Measurement to Action*. The World Bank Washington, DC. pp.43-84.
- Mwaura, P.A.M., Sylva, K. & Malmberg, L. (2008) Evaluating the Madrassa Preschool Programme in East Africa: A Quasi-Experimental Study. *International Journal of Early Years Education*. 16(3) Pp.237-255. DOI: 10.1080/09669760802357121 .
- Myers, R. (2001) *Thematic Studies: Early Childhood Care and Development*. Paris, France: UNESCO.
- Myers, R. (1995) *The Twelve Who Survive: Strengthening Programmes of Early Childhood Development in the Third World* (2nd ed.). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
- Myers, R.G. (2006) *Quality in Program of Early Childhood Care and Education. Paper Commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. UNESCO.

- Myers, R.G. (1993) *Toward a Fair Start for Children: Programming for Early Childhood Care and Development in the Developing World*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Myers, R.G. (2000) *Early Childhood Care and Development: A Global Review*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Nakpodia, E.D. (2011) Early Childhood Education: Its Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nigerian Educational System. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*. 5(3) pp.159-163.
- National Bureau of Statistics, (2010) *Harmonized Nigeria Living Standard Survey (HNLSS)*. . Abuja, Nigeria: National Bureau of Statistics. Available at: <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/HARMONIZED%20NIGERIA%20LIVING%20STANDARD%20SURVEY%202009%20Part%20A.pdf> (Accessed: 14/7/ 2016).
- National Planning Commission and UNICEF (2001) Situation and Policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria. Paper Presented at the Conference of African Curriculum Change.
- National Population Commission. (2006) *Census Figure for Imo State*. Abuja: NPC.
- Neuman, M.J. & Devercelli, A.E. (2012) Early Childhood Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*. 6(2) pp.21-34. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/2288-6729-6-2-21> (Accessed: 4/6/14).
- Neuman, M. (2005) Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care: Recent Developments in OECD Countries. *Early Years: Journal of International Research & Development*. 25(2) pp.129-141. DOI: 10.1080/09575140500130992 .
- Newman, L. & Obed, L. (2015) The Nigerian integrated early childhood development policy: Perspectives on literacy learning. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*. 5(1) pp.1-20. DOI: 10.4102/sajce.v5i1.353
- Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, (2013) *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC).
- Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, (2007) *National Policy for Integrated Early Childhood Development in Nigeria*. Nigeria: NERDC.
- Nigerian Educational Research Development Council, (2005) *National Minimum Standard for Early Child Care Centres in Nigeria*. Abuja, Nigeria: NERDC Press.
- Nigerian National Planning Commission, (2004) *Meeting Everyone's Needs: National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy*. Washington, DC. International Monetary Fund.
- Nores, M. & Barnett, W.S. (2010) Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions across the World: (Under) Investing in the Very Young. *Economics of Education Review*. 29(2) pp.271-282. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.001> .
- Nores, M., Belfield, C.R., Barnett, S.W. & Schweinhart, L. (2005) Updating the Economic Impacts of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 27(3) pp.245-261. Available at:

<http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/62070904?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 1/4/2013).

Nsamenang, A.B. (2007) Origins and Development of Scientific Psychology in Afrique Noire. In Stevens, M.J. & Wedding, D. (eds.) *IUPsyS Global Resource (Edition 2007)*. *International Journal of Psychology*. 42(1).

Nsamenang, A.B. (2008) (Mis) Understanding ECD in Africa: The Force of Local and Imposed Motives. In: Garcia, M., Pence, A. & Evans, E. L. (eds.) *Africa's future, Africa's challenge: Early childhood care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp. 135-49) Washington, DC: World Bank.

Nsamenang, A.B. (2006) Cultures in early childhood care and education. In: Hedegaard, M., Tudge, J. & Fler, M. (eds.) *World Yearbook of Education 2009: Childhood Studies and the Impact of Globalization-Policies and Practices at Global and local Levels*. New York: Routledge. pp.23-45.

Nsamenang, A.B. (1995) Factors Influencing the Development of Psychology in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Psychology*. 30(6) pp.729-739. DOI: 10.1080/00207599508246598.

Nsamenang, A.B. (2005) Educational Development and Knowledge Flow: Local and Global Forces in Human Development in Africa. *Higher Education Policy*. 18(3) pp.275-288.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300090>

Nwakonobi, G. (2007) *Population and Urbanization Issues*. Owerri, Nigeria: Cape Publishers International Ltd.

Obisanya, O. (2001) Early childhood Intervention Programmes in Nigeria: Issues Problems and Challenges. In: David, T. (ed.) *Promoting Evidence-Based Practice in Early Childhood Education: Research and its Implications*. UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.115-130.

Obiweluzor, N. (2015) Early Childhood Education in Nigeria, Policy Implementation: Critique and a Way Forward. *African Journal of Teacher Education*. 4(1).

OECD (2012b) *Education Today 2013: The OECD Perspective*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2011a) *Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Minimum Standards Matter*, Paris: OECD.

OECD (2006b) *A Systemic and Integrated Approach to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Policy Starting Strong II*. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Paris: OECD.

OECD (2006a) *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: Organization for Economic Corporation and Development Publishing.

Ogbeide, E.N.O. & Agu, D.O. (2015) Poverty and Income Inequality in Nigeria: Any Causality? *Asian Economic and Financial Review*. 5(3) pp.439-452.
Doi:10.18488/journalaefr/2015.5.3/102.3.439.452

Ogbonna, G. & Appah, E. (2012) Petroleum income and Nigerian Economy: Empirical Evidence. *Arabian Journal of Business Management Review (OMAN Chapter)*. 1(9) pp.33-59.

- Okonjo-Iweala, N. & Osafo-Kwaako, P. (2007) *Nigeria's Economic Reforms: Progress and Challenges*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Olesen, H.S. (2012) The Societal Nature of Subjectivity: An Interdisciplinary Methodological Challenge. In: *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*.
- Ololube, N.P. (2007) The relationship between funding, ICT, selection processes, administration and planning and the standard of science teacher education in Nigeria. In: *Asia-Pacific Forum on Science Learning and Teaching*. Hong Kong Institute of Education. 10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong. pp.1-29.
- Omotayo, D.M., Ihebereme, C. & Maduewesi, B.U. (2008) Management of Universal Basic Education Scheme (U.B.E.) For Qualitative Education in Nigeria. *Education*. 129(2) pp.308-314. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=35732420&site=ehost-live>. (Accessed: 12/3/2014).
- Onu, V.C., Obiozor, W.E., Agbo, O.E. & Ezeanwu, C. (2010) Integration and Innovation in early Childhood Education in Nigeria: Implications for Quality Teacher Production. *African Journal of Teacher Education*. 1(1) pp.209-221.
- Onwuegbuzie, A.J. & Combs, J.P. (2011) Data Analysis in Mixed Research: A primer. *International Journal of Education*. 3(1) pp.13.
- Onyenechere, E.C. (2011) Spatial Distribution of Women Informal Economic Activities in The Rural Areas of Imo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Geography and Regional Planning*. 4(1) pp.20-35.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2011b) *Investing in High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Orkin, K., Yadete, W.A. & Woodhead, M. (2012) *Delivering Quality Early Learning in Low-Resource Settings: Progress and Challenges in Ethiopia*. The Hague, Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation Publication Inc.
- Orlikowski, W.J. & Baroudi, J.J. (1991) Studying information technology in organizations: Research approaches and assumptions. *Information Systems Research*. 2(1) pp.1-28.
- Osakue, S.O. (2011) Repositioning Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: The Children's Theatre Approach. *Academic Research International*. 1(2) pp.206-214.
- Peisner-Feinberg E. S., Yazejian N. (2010). Research on Program Quality: The Evidence Base. In: Wesley P. W. and Buysse, V. (eds.). *The Quest for Quality: Promising Innovations for Early Childhood Programmes* (pp. 21-45). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., Burchinal, M.R., Clifford, R.M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S.L. & Yazejian, N. (2001) The Relation of Preschool Child-Care Quality to Children's Cognitive and Social Developmental Trajectories through Second Grade. *Child Development*. 72(5) pp.1534-1553. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/62288874?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 16/7/2014).
- Pence, A. & Nsamenang, B. (2008) *A Case for Early Childhood Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Working Papers in Early Childhood Development, No. 51*. Bernard van Leer Foundation.

The Hague, Netherlands. Available at:

<http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/898324688?accountid=13578>. (Accessed 19/2/14).

Penn, H. (2009) *Early Childhood Education and Care: Key Lessons from Research for Policy Makers*. Brussels: European Commission.

Penn, H. (2004) *Childcare and Early Childhood Development Programmes and their Relationship to Eradicating Child Poverty*. - *Chip Report no. 8*. London: Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre (CHIP).

Penn, H. (2011) Travelling Policies and Global Buzzwords: How International Non-Governmental Organizations and Charities Spread the Word about Early Childhood in the Global South. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*. 18(1) pp. December 17, 2012-94-113. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/854551388?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 1/10/2013)

Penn, H. (2008a) *Early Childhood Education in Southern Africa: A Perspective Report*. England: CfBT Education Trust. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/772159593?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 1/10/2013)

Penn, H. (2002) The World Bank's View of Early Childhood. *Childhood*. 9(1) pp.118. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=7899027&site=ehost-live>. (Accessed: 1/10/2014)

Penn, H. (2008) *Understanding Early Childhood: Issues and Controversies*. (2nd ed.) Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/Open University Press.

Penn, H. & Lloyd, E. (2012) *Childcare Markets: Can they Deliver an Equitable Service?* Bristol: Policy.

Penn, H. (2005) *Unequal Childhoods: Young Children's Lives in Poor Countries*. (1st ed.) London: Routledge.

Peshkin, A. (1988) In Search of Subjectivity-One's Own. *Educational Researcher*. 17(7) pp.17-21. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/63113675?accountid=13578>. (Accessed 2/10/2016)

Phillips, D., Mekos, D., Scarr, S., McCartney, K. & Abbott-Shim, M. (2000) Within and Beyond the Classroom Door: Assessing Quality in Child Care Centers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 15(4) pp.475-496. DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(01\)00077-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(01)00077-1).

Pülzl, H. and Treib, O. (2006) Policy Implementation. In Fischer, F., Miller, G. J. and Sidney, M. S. (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods* (Boca Raton: CRC Press) pp. 89-107.

Punch, K. (2005) *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage Publications.

Punch, K.F. (2013) *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

- Qureshi, Zia. (2015) The Role of Public Policy in Sustainable Infrastructure. In COP21 at Paris: What to Expect. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. Available at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/global_20160818_sustainable_infrastructure.pdf (Accessed: 20/7/11)
- Rao, N. (2010) Preschool Quality and the Development of Children from Economically Disadvantaged Families in India. *Early Education and Development*. 21(2) pp.167-185. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10409281003635770>
- Reddy, S. and Heuty, R. (2004) Achieving the MDGs: A Critique and a Strategy. Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies Working Paper Series, 14(3) Available at <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/13325/1/Achieving%20the%20MDGs%20A%20Critique%20and%20a%20Strategy.pdf?> (Accessed: 19/10/2016)
- Rees, N.S. & Johnson, K. (2000) A lesson in Smaller Class Sizes. *Heritage Views*. pp.670-674.
- Robson, C. (2011) *Real World Research: A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings*. (3rd ed.) Chichester: Wiley.
- Rosenthal, M.K. (1999) Out-Of-Home Child Care Research: A Cultural Perspective. *International Journal of Behavioural Development*. 23(2) pp.477-518. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/016502599383928>
- Roskos, K. & Neuman, S. (1993) Enhancing Head Start Parents' Conceptions of Literacy Development and their Confidence as Literacy Teachers: A Study of Parental Involvement. *Early Child Development and Care*. 89(1) pp.57-73.
- Sabatier, P. (2005) From Policy Implementation to Policy Change: A Personal Odyssey. In Gornitzka, A., Kogan, M. And Amral, A. (Eds.) *Reform and Change in Higher Education: Analysing Policy Implementation*, Dordrecht: Springer, Pp.17-34.
- Sachs, J. (2005a) *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for our Time*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Sahn, D.E. & Stifel, D.C. (2003) Progress toward the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. *World Development*. 31(1) pp.23-52. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=8762005&site=ehost-live>. (Accessed 13/4/14)
- Saith, A. (2006) From Universal Values to Millennium Development Goals: Lost in Translation. *Development & Change*. 37(6) pp.1167-1199. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7660.2006.00518.x.
- Salami, I.A. (2016) Nigerian Early Childhood Education Policies and Practice for Sustainability. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences Vol*. 4(5).
- Salkind, N.J. (2010) *Encyclopaedia of Research Design*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288>
- Sargeant, J. (2012) Qualitative research part II: Participants, Analysis, and Quality Assurance. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*. 4(1) pp.1-3. <https://doi.org/10.4300/JGME-D-11-00307.1>

- Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2003) *Research Methods for Business Students*. (3rd ed.) Harlow; New York: Prentice Hall.
- Save the Children. (2012) *Born Equal: How Reducing Inequality could give our Children a Better Future*. London: Save the Children, UK. Available at: <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/294551> (Accessed: August 13, 2013).
- Schnattschneider, E. (1960) *The semi-sovereign people*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Schutt, R. (2006) *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. California: Pine Forge Press.
- Schwandt, T.A. (1994) Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry. In: In Denzin, N. K. Denzin & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. pp.118-137.
- Schwandt, T.A. (2001) Responsiveness and Everyday Life. In Greene, J. C. & Abma, T. A. (eds.) *Responsive Evaluation. New Directions for Evaluation* Vol. 92, pp. 73–88). DOI: 10.1002/ev.36.
- Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R. & Nores, M. (2005) *Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study through Age 40, Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, no.14*. Ypsilanti, MI: High Scope Press.
- Schweinhart, L.J. & Weikart, D.P. (1997) The High/Scope Preschool Curriculum Comparison Study through Age 23. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 12(2) pp.117-143.
- Shonkoff, J. & Phillips, D. (2000) *From Neurons to Neighbourhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Shonkoff, J.P. and Richmond, J.B. (2009) Investment in Early Childhood Development Lays the Foundation for A Prosperous And Sustainable Society. In: Tremblay, R.E., Boivin, M. & Peters, F. (eds.) Montreal, Quebec: Center of Excellence for Early Childhood Development and Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development. pp.1-5.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2010) "A Focus on Pedagogy: Case Studies of Effective Practice". In: K. Sylva, E. Melhuish, P. Sammons, I. Siraj-Blatchford and B. Taggart (eds.) *Early Childhood Matters: Evidence from the Effective Pre-school and Primary Education Project* (ed.) London: Routledge. pp.149-165.
- Siraj-Blatchford, J. (2009) Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 41(2) pp.9-22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03168875>
- Slegers, B. (1997) *Brain Development and its Relationship to Early Childhood Education*. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/62596835?accountid=13578>. (Accessed 10/10/15).
- Smith, A. B., Grima, G., Gaffney, M., Powell, K., Masses, L., & Barnett, S. (2000) *Strategic Research Initiative Literature Review Early Childhood Education. Report to the Ministry of Education*. Dunedin: Children's Issues Centre. DOI:10.1.1.466.4780&rep=rep1&type=pdf
- Smith, A. (2002) *Policy Transfer in the Development of UK Climate Policy for Business*. University of Sussex, SPRU. DOI:10.1.1.150.442&rep=rep1&type=pdf

- Sneath, D. (2010) How NGOs React: Globalization and Education Reform in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Mongolia. *Comparative Education Review*. 54(3) pp.456-458. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=62008696&site=ehost-live>. ((Accessed: 27/9/14))
- Sooter, T. (2013) Early Childhood Education in Nigeria: Issues and Problems. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. 3(5) pp.173. DOI:10.1.1.1016.9946&rep=rep1&type=pdf
- Stake, R.E. (2000) Case studies. In: Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp.435-454.
- Stake, R.E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, London: Sage
- Stark, S. & Torrance, H. (2005) Case Study In: Somekh, B. & Lewin, C. (eds.) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage Publications. pp.33-40.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2013) *Standards are Good (for) Business: Standardized Comparison and the Private Sector in Education*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2015.1014883>
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2007) International Knowledge Banks and the Production of Educational Crisis. *European Educational Research Journal*. 6(3) pp.285-293.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2004) *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2003) Education in Transition: International Perspectives on the Politics and Processes of Change. *Comparative Education Review*. 47(3) pp.334. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=11336009&site=ehost-live>. ((Accessed: 14/7/2016))
- Steiner-Khamsi, Gita (2009) International Knowledge Bank in Education: Catalysts for Competition, Coercion and Convergence. In D. Junker, W. Mausbach & M. Thunert, (eds.), *State and Market in a Globalized World. Transatlantic Perspectives*. Heidelberg, Germany: Universitätsverlag Winter, pp. 251-270.
- Stiglitz, J. (1999) Scan Globally, Reinvent Locally: Knowledge Infrastructure and the Localisation of Knowledge. In: Stone, D. (ed.), *Banking on Knowledge: The Genesis of the Global Development Network*, London: Routledge.
- Stiglitz, J.E. (2003) *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Stone, D. (2001) *Learning Lessons, Policy Transfer and the International Diffusion of Policy Ideas*. Coventry, United Kingdom: University of Warwick Center for the Study of Globalization and Regionalization.
- Sulaiman, F.R. (2012) Internationalization in Education: The British Colonial Policies on Education in Nigeria 1882-1926. *Journal of Sociological Research*. 3(2) pp.84-101. DOI: 10.5296/jsr.v3i2.2222.
- Swiniarski, L. (2007) Starting School Early in Britain: A Model for Universal Preschool Education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*. 35(1) pp.19-24. DOI: 10.1007/s10643-007-0182-7.

- Sword, W. (1999) Accounting for Presence of Self: Reflections on Doing Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research*. 9(2) pp.270-278. DOI/pdf/10.1177/104973299129121839
- Sylva, K. (2007) The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project. Finding From the Preschool Period. *Teacher Education*. 1(1) pp.209-221.
- Sylva, K., Edward, M., Pam, S., Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Taggart, B. (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-School to End of Key Stage 1*. Nottingham, United Kingdom: Department for Education and Skills.
- Taguma, M., Litjens, I. & Makowiecki, K. (2013) Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: Norway. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Taiwo, A.A. & Tyolo, J.B. (2002) The Effect of Pre-School Education on Academic Performance in Primary School: A Case Study of Grade One Pupils in Botswana. *International Journal of Educational Development*. 22(2) pp.169-180. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(01\)00020-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(01)00020-7).
- Telli, G. (2013) How Should Quality of Education Be Re-Defined for Education Achievements in Tanzania? What are Stakeholders' Opinions? *Journal of International Education and Leadership Volume*. 3(1). Available at <http://www.jielusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Telli-Final.pdf> (Accessed 26/1/15)
- Terrell, S.R. (2012) Mixed-Methods Research Methodologies. *The Qualitative Report*. 17(1) pp.254-280. Available at: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1819&context=tqr> (Accessed 7/1/16)
- Thomas, G. (2011a) *How to do Your Case Study: A Guide for Students & Researchers*. . London: Sage Publications.
- Thomas, G. (2011b) A Typology for The Case Study in Social Science Following A Review Of Definition, Discourse, And Structure. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 17(6) pp.511-521. DOI: 10.1177/1077800411409884.
- Thomas, N. & Maynard, T. (2004) *An Introduction to Early Childhood Studies*. London: Sage
- Tijani Alou, M. (2009) Between Autonomy and Dependence: "Policy Transfer" Dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa". In NORRAG Conference on Policy Transfer or Policy Learning: Interactions between International and National Skills Development Approaches for Policy Making. Geneva: NORRAG, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. pp.25-26
- Tilly, C. (2004) Past, Present, and Future Globalizations. In: Steiner-Khamsi, G. (Ed.) *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*. (ed.) New York: Teachers College Press. pp.13-28.
- Ugwu, D.S. & Kanu, I.O. (2012) Effects of Agricultural Reforms on the Agricultural Sector in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Development*. 4(2) pp.51. DOI: 10.5897/JASD11.029
- Ujah, E. Nigeria Owes \$6.67 Billion External Debt, Says Okonjo-Iweala. *Vanguard*. pp.1. Available at: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/06/nigeria-owes-6-67-billion-external-debt-says-okonjo-iweala/> (Accessed: November 13, 2013).

UNESCO (2014) *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for all 2013/14 Education for all Global Monitoring Report*. Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNESCO (2012b) *Reaching Out –Of –School Children is Crucial for Development*. UIS Fact Sheet. UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

UNESCO (2012a) *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*. Education for all Monitoring Report. France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

UNESCO (2011) *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education*. France: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2010c) *Reaching the Marginalized: Education for all Global Monitoring Report 2010*. France: Oxford University Press and UNESCO.

UNESCO (2010b) *Early Childhood Care and Education Regional Report: Africa*. Dakar, Senegal: Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (BREDA).

UNESCO (2010a) *The Central Role of Education in the Millennium Development Goals*. Dakar, Senegal: UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO (2009) *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*. Education for all Global Monitoring Report 2009. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO (2007) *Education for all Global Monitoring Report 2007. Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. France: UNESCO Publishing.

UNESCO (2006) *Nigeria Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programmes - Country Profile Prepared for the Education for all Global Monitoring Report 2007 Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. Switzerland: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001472/147201e.pdf> (Accessed: November 10, 2013).

UNESCO (2005) *Education for all: The Quality Imperative*. Education for all Global Monitoring Report 2005. Graphoprint, Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2000) *The Dakar Framework for Action*. Education for all: Meeting our Collective Commitments. Paris, France: Graphoprint.

UNICEF (1959) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: UNICEF.

UNICEF-Lagos, Nigeria & Nigeria. Federal Government (2001) Federal government of Nigeria and United Nations Children's Fund master plan of operations: country programme of cooperation 1997-2001. UNICEF. Available at: <http://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/824-NG01-16736.pdf> (Accessed: 3/3/15)

United Nations General Assembly (2010) *Keeping the Promise: A Forward-Looking Review to Promote an Agreed Action Agenda to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015*. New York: United Nations.

United Nations (2013) *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*. New York: United Nations.

- United Nations (1989) *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Geneva: United Nations.
- Urban, M. (2010) Rethinking Professionalism in Early Childhood: Untested Feasibilities and Critical Ecologies. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. 11(1) pp.1-7.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2010.11.1.1>.
- Urban, M., Vandenbroeck, M., Lazzari, A., Van Laere, K. & Peeters, J. (2012) Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care. Final Report. Available at: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED534599.pdf> (Accessed: 15/1/14)
- Urban, M. (2009) *Early Childhood Education in Europe. Achievements: Challenges and Possibilities*. Available at:
<http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/1140131686?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 19/2/14)
- Urwick, J. (2002) Determinants of the Private Costs of Primary and Early Childhood Education: Findings from Plateau State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Development*. 22(2) pp.131-144. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(00\)00082-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(00)00082-1)
- Vandell, D. & Wolfe, B. (2000) *Child Care Quality: Does it Matter and does it Need to be Improved?* Institute for Research on Poverty University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI. Available at https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_wifis17c01.pdf. (Accessed: 22/10/14)
- Vargas-Barón, E. (2005) *Planning Policies for Early Childhood Development: Guidelines for Action*. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001395/139545e.pdf (Accessed: 12/10/15)
- Walker, W.E. (2000) Policy Analysis: A Systematic Approach to Supporting Policymaking in the Public Sector. *Journal of Multi-criteria Decision Analysis*. 9(1-3) pp.11-27.
- Walker, W.E., Rahman, S.A. & Cave, J. (2001) Adaptive Policies, Policy Analysis, and Policy-Making. *European Journal of Operational Research*. 128(2) pp.282-289.
- Walsh, G. & Gardner, J. (2005) Assessing the Quality of Early Learning Environments. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*. 7(1). Available at: <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v7n1/walsh.html> (Accessed: 8/10/15)
- Walsham, G. (1995) The Emergence of Interpretivism in IS Research. *Information Systems Research*. 6(4) pp.376-394. DOI: 10.1287/isre.6.4.376
- Watkins, K. (2013) Narrowing Africa's Education Deficit. *Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent in 2013*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, Africa Growth Initiative. Available at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Foresight_Watkins_2013.pdf. (Accessed: 4/4/15)
- Weaver, R.K. (2010) *But Will it Work? Implementation Analysis to Improve Government Performance*. Governance Studies at Brookings. Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/02_implementation_analysis_weaver.pdf (Accessed: 30/7/2017).

- Weaver, R.K. (2009) *Target Compliance: The Final Frontier of Policy Implementation*. Governance Studies at Brookings. Available at: <http://spp.ceu.edu/sites/spp.ceu.hu/files/attachment/event/1211/policy-brief.pdf> (Accessed: 30/7/17).
- Woodhead, M. (2005) Early childhood development: A question of Rights. *International Journal of Early Childhood*. 37(3) pp.79-98. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/772150179?accountid=13578>. (Accessed: 30/4/16)
- Woodhead, M. (1998) "Quality" in Early Childhood Programmes--A Contextually Appropriate Approach. *International Journal of Early Years Education*. 6(1) pp.5-17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0966976980060101>
- Woodhead, M. (1996) *In Search of the Rainbow: Pathways to Quality in Large Scale Programmes for Young Disadvantaged Children*. The Hague, Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation. Available at <http://search.proquest.com/professional/docview/62567184?accountid=13578>. Accessed: 14/2/15).
- World Bank (2006) *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*. World Bank. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5989>. (Accessed 8/8/15).
- World Bank Group (2011a) *Early Child Development (ECD) Projects*. World Bank.
- World Bank (2013b) *Education Sector Overhaul: Increasing Enrolment, Completion, and Quality in Nigerian Schools*. World Bank Group. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2013/02/04/education-sector-overhaul>. (Accessed 3/3/15).
- World Bank (2013a) *Early Childhood Development – Key Issues*. World Bank. Available at: www.worldbank.org/en/topic/earlychildhooddevelopment/overview (Accessed 10/2/15)
- World Bank (2013) *Business, Competitiveness and Development*. The World Bank. Available at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/WBIPROGRAMS/CGCSRLP/0,,contentMDK:20839300~pagePK:64156158~piPK:64152884~theSitePK:460861,00.html> (Accessed: 19/3/2015).
- World Bank (2011c) *Why Invest in Early Child Development (ECD)*. World Bank.
- World Bank (2010) 'Early Childhood Development: The Earlier the Better'. In *World Bank Conference on Education for All, (1990) Meeting basic learning needs: A vision for the 1990s. World Conference on Education for All (2000) Jomtien, Thailand, 5-9 March 1990*. New York: The Inter-Agency Commission (UNDO, UNESCO, UNICEF, WORLD BANK). Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2010/10/12/early-childhood-development-the-earlier-the-better>. (Accessed: 11/4/2014).
- Yaro, I., Arshad, R. & Salleh, D. (2016) Education Stakeholder's Constraints in Policy Decisions For Effective Policy Implementation in Nigeria. *British Journal of Education, Society & Science*. 14(1) pp.1-12. DOI: 10.9734/BJESBS/2016/22606.
- Yin, R.K. (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

- Yin, R. K. (2003) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Young, M.E., Ebrary, I. & Richardson, L.M. (2007) *Early Child Development from Measurement to Action: A Priority for Growth and Equity*. Washington, D.C: World Bank.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide for Parents

Child's learning environment / Partnership or relationships with setting How old is your child?

How long has he/she been attending this setting?

What time does he start and what time does he finish?

Could you describe your child's day in school to me?

What is your view about the length of time your child spends in school?

Do you think it is too long or too short?

What is your view about his relationship with his/her teacher? Do you think he gets on well with his teachers?

If anything goes wrong with the child, are you able to discuss with the teacher?

What do you think he is learning?

Can you describe the current state of infrastructures and facilities like water, electricity, toilet facilities, classroom space, play facilities and learning materials?

How did you come to choose this school?

Does the setting ever invite you into the classroom to see what is happening?

Cost of ECE

How much does the education and care of your child cost you per term?

Do you pay other fees besides the tuition fee?

If cost is high in private settings what have you against sending your child to a free government funded setting? (*This is for parents with children in high fee-paying settings*)

Do you think you are getting good value for money?

Would you go somewhere else if you could afford it?

Parents perceived rights in child's setting

As a parent do you think you have a right in your child's school?

If yes what sort of right do you have?

Do they hear your voice when you speak?

Do you have a say in how your child is disciplined or is it entirely up to the school and teacher?

In what areas do you see the need to improve? How will you go about this?

If you have any reservation or needed to change anything, what would that be and who would you speak to?

Appendix B: Interview guide for teachers and proprietors

Teacher Development and Conditions of Service

How long have you been teaching?

What is your educational qualification?

Do you have any training or qualification in early childhood education?

What in-service training or staff development opportunities are available to you?

How often do you attend these trainings?

What are your views on your salary, allowances and other benefits?

School Environment/Partnership with Parents

What age range does your setting admit?

What are your opening hours?

Why do you keep children for so long/short time?

Can you describe the current state of infrastructures and facilities like water, electricity, toilet facilities, classroom space, play facilities and learning materials?

What safety measures are in place for both indoor and outdoor activities in your setting?

Do parents have a voice or say in your school activities? if yes What types of activities do you involve them in?

How do you keep parents informed about the daily/weekly progress of their children?

What provision is made for children and families with special needs and additional support?

Do parents of children with special needs contribute to the development/planning of programmes and learning activities for their children?

What learning aids are available for such children in your setting?

Adult-child ratio/group size

Can you give me an idea of what the nursery school population is?

What is the adult-child ratio in your setting?

How many teachers are assigned to each class?

What is the official or government stipulated ratio?

How does your present group size affect the teaching and care you provide for children?

Curriculum and adult-child interactions

What curriculum is implemented in your setting?

What trainings have you received on the implementation?
of the new national curriculum for ECEC?

What types of activities do children in your setting engage in everyday?

Is there free choice for children or are they meant to follow set down rules and routines?

How do you meet the different needs of children in your classroom?

How do you protect children from abuse in your setting?

Funding and quality assurance in ECE

What is the major source of funding for your setting? how regular is it?

How are facilities, learning materials and resources provided and maintained?

Does any government regulatory agency inspect facilities and programmes in your setting?

How often do they visit your setting?

Appendix C: Codes used for interviewees in the case study settings

Teachers' code

TWP T1	Teacher 1 of the TWP setting
TWP T2	Teacher 2 of the TWP setting
TWP T3	Teacher 3 of the TWP setting
MSP T1	Teacher 1 of the MSP setting
SS T1	Teacher 1 of the SS setting
ORJ T1	Teacher 1 of the ORJ setting
ORJ T2	Teacher 2 of the ORJ setting
ORJ T3	Teacher 3 of the ORJ setting
URAT T1	Teacher 1 of the URAT setting
URAT T2	Teacher 2 of the URAT setting
URAT T3	Teacher 3 of the URAT setting
URAT T5	Teacher 5 of the URT setting
UZ T1	Teacher 1 of UZ setting
UZ T2	Teacher 2 of UZ setting
MOD T1	Teacher 1 of MOD setting
Mod T3	Teacher 3 of MOD setting
BO T1	Teacher 1 of the BO setting
BO T2	Teacher 2 of the BO setting
BO Proprietor	Proprietor of the BO setting
OLU Proprietor	OLU setting

OLU T1 Teacher 1 of OLU setting

OLU T2 Teacher 2 of OLU setting

Parents' codes

BO P1 BO parent 1

Bo P2 BO parent 2

UZ P1 UZ parent 1

UZI P2 UZ parent 2

UZI P3 UZ parent 3

MSP P1 MSP parent 1

MSP P2 MSP parent 2

MSP P3 MSP parent 3

TWP P1 TWP parent 1

TWP P2 TWP parent 2

TWP P3 TWP parent 3

TWP P4 TWP parent 4

TWP P5 TWP parent 5

SS P1 SS parent 1

SS P2 SS parent 2

MOD P1 MOD parent 1

MOD P2 MOD parent 2

URT P1 URT parent 1

URT P2 URT parent 2

Appendix D: Questionnaire on Quality and Access in Early Childhood Education

The purpose of this study is to examine the 2007 national policy in relation to providing access and high quality learning for children between birth-five years in early childhood education in Imo State. This study is being conducted in conjunction with Cass School of Education and Communities, University of East London. This questionnaire seeks to establish your perception on the provisions available to children. Participation in this study is voluntary and you will not be pressured to give information you do not desire to give. Any information given is confidential and will not be linked to you in anyway. Your name is not required and you are free to withdraw from this study if you so wish. Thank you for your cooperation.

Part A

Personal Information

Please Circle the most appropriate response

Age: a) Under 18 b) 18-65 c) Over 65

Gender: a) Female b) Male

Educational Qualification: a) Certificate b) Diploma c) First Degree d) Postgraduate

Type of Establishment you work in: (a) Private (b) Government Establishment (c) Others

Part B

Using the scale below, indicate your views on the following statements on provisions for children in Early Childhood Education and Care in Imo State by circling your responses

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Curriculum

SD

SA

The 2007 National Curriculum Framework is effectively implemented in all ECEC settings in Imo State	1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---	---

Curriculum content is the same for children in early years settings in Imo State	1	2	3	4
--	---	---	---	---

Children access the curriculum equally	1	2	3	4
--	---	---	---	---

The curriculum meets the individual needs and circumstances of children	1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---	---

Funding, Quality Assurance and Children's Learning Environment	SD			SA
Government funded ECEC settings are adequately and regularly funded	1	2	3	4
Private early years settings are adequately funded by government	1	2	3	4
Settings are effectively monitored and controlled to ensure compliance to stipulated standards	1	2	3	4
Frequency of inspection and monitoring is high	1	2	3	4
Punitive measure is in place in the event of non-compliance	1	2	3	4
Early years learning environment meet stipulated government standard	1	2	3	4
Settings are supported and encouraged in quality improvement in ECE	1	2	3	4
There is regular provision of Infrastructures and facilities in early years setting	1	2	3	4
Learning materials and resources are adequately supplied	1	2	3	4
Equity Access and Quality of Provisions	SD			SA
The policy framework address inequality in early childhood education in Imo State.	1	2	3	4
There is equal access for children between birth-five years in ECEC in Imo State	1	2	3	4
The quality of provisions for children in private and government setting is the same	1	2	3	4
Adult-child ratios in early years settings is adequate	1	2	3	4
There is adequate provisions for children with special educational needs	1	2	3	4
Disadvantaged children are adequately catered for in ECE in Imo State	1	2	3	4
There is co-ordination between agencies charged with the delivery of ECEC in Imo State	1	2	3	4

Teacher Development and Conditions of Service	SD				SA
Teachers' continuing development programmes exists for ECE practitioners in Imo State	1	2	3	4	
Teachers have been adequately trained to deliver the new curriculum	1	2	3	4	
Recruitment of trained early years teachers matches the demand in ECEC in Imo State	1	2	3	4	
There is high retention of early years workers in Imo State	1	2	3	4	
Condition of service for ECE teachers in Imo State is consistent with that of their counter parts in primary and secondary school	1	2	3	4	
Teachers' training needs are regularly assessed and met by the of government	1	2	3	4	
Distribution of early years teachers between rural and urban areas is equitable	1	2	3	4	

Appendix E Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to participate in a research study. I am Aligbe Ngozi Teresa. I am currently undertaking a research in conjunction with the School of Education, University of Roehampton, London. My focus is on the issues of Quality and Access to Early Childhood Education and Care in Imo State Nigeria. The aim of this study is to explore the different perceptions of key stakeholders in early years education in Owerri, Imo State in relation to governments claim of creating equal access to affordable quality education for all children between the ages of birth-five years.

This study provides opportunity to air your views on the issues of access to and quality of provision as well as other practical issues in early years education. You will be interviewed and the information you give will be tape recorded and later transcribed. You may also be asked to complete some questionnaires. Information given will be strictly for the purpose of research and will remain confidential. Participants in this study will be fully informed of the progress made up until the time of publication.

As a researcher, I have the obligation to ensure that participants are protected throughout the course of the study. I wish to state therefore, that participation in this study is voluntary; participants can withdraw at any time and will not be pressured to change their mind or to give a reason for that; data collected will be securely stored; anonymity of participants will be ensured during the study and even when reporting the findings; nobody outside the research team will be allowed access to information gathered.

If you are interested in participating, please indicate an appropriate date and time, to enable me arrange for a meeting with you.

Contact Details

Aligbe Ngozi Teresa
School of Education
University of Roehampton
Email: aligben@roehampton.ac.uk

Appendix F Consent Statement:



Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Professor of Education and Philosophy and Head of Research (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)

Director of Studies Contact Details:
Contact Details:
Professor Mathias Urban
Director, Early Childhood Research Centre
University of Roehampton
London, W15 5PJ
Roehampton Lane
E-mail: mathias.urban@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 8392 3276

Professor of Education and
Philosophy and Head of Research
Professor Andrew Stables
Department of Education
University of Roehampton
Froebel College
London, W15 5PJ
E-mail: andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 8392 3865